



Owasco Lake Watershed Management Council (OLWMC)

March 16th, 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 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

- After a robust 3-year public process, and final review and approval of the updated Watershed Rules and Regulations via a joint meeting by City of Auburn and Town of Owasco, the regulatory document carried without further review and was delivered to NYS agencies for their review and consideration for approval and adoption. A great many local organizational and government endorsement resolutions, as well as letters of support by local business owners, real estate agencies, water consumers, and concerned watershed residents, were written and delivered to the governor’s office as well as NYS representatives.
- The OLWMC and its partners have hosted meetings with NYS politicians to answer any questions related to updated watershed regulations that are currently under review for approval by the NYS DOH.

- NYS Level Regulations

Senator Karckham and Assemblyman Englebright are likely to revisit and bring the Class C tributary protection bill to the NYS Senate and Assembly, respectively. The original version of the bill passed both groups in 2020, but was not signed into law.

- 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 Updates and Special Projects

- 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 now plan to hold twice-annual regulatory meetings. The January 21st meeting offered insights into the need for improved communication between watershed municipal planning boards and the OLWIPD. The next meeting is expected to be scheduled for late June or so to compliment the new routine of winter and early summer meetings to ensure good communications and coordination. Broadly, NYSDEC Region 7 is responsible for regulatory enforcement of permitted facilities within the Owasco Lake Watershed including large-scale residential development activities, and the OLWIPD acts as a local enforcement arm according to local watershed rules and regulations.

- Education and Outreach

- The 2020 OLWIPD Annual Report is complete and will be delivered to watershed municipal offices for assistance with community distribution.
- 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.

- Behavioral Science Training and Recognition Efforts

- OLWMC staff and partners 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. Evidn has been finalizing a new session for watershed leaders, to build upon leadership strengths to better engage with the watershed community.
- OLWMC staff have scheduled their semi-monthly watershed recognition articles with the Citizen for 2021.
- The OLWMC's early March recognition article, published with the Citizen spotlighted the HWA research and associated mitigation projects at Fillmore Glen State Park.

- Lake Friendly Living
 - The Lake Friendly Living Coalition of the Finger Lakes is coordinating a Lake Friendly Living Awareness Week public webinar series to be held the first week of May intended to increase public awareness about the various watershed concerns and corrective actions taking place across the Finger Lakes Region. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) will sponsor the event at a high level and will sponsor a key note speaker presentation. Information about the Lake Friendly Living program can be found on the OLWMC website.
 - Program signage is poised for spring installation on existing tributary ID signage and at municipality locations where program endorsements and permissions were gained. The OLWIPD is coordinating signage installations with assistance from municipal highway departments.

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 design '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 signs. 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. To date, resolutions to endorse and/or take the LFL pledge from the City of Auburn, the Towns of Scipio, Fleming, Moravia, Sennett 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. Municipal highway superintendents are collaborating with OLWIPD staff for the attachment of program 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.

- 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. These organizations are cost-sharing ‘no dumping-drains to lake’ storm drain medallions and ‘lake friendly living’ signs.
 - All of the watershed municipalities that have resolved to take the pledge via a resolution, have agreed to attach LFL signage to existing municipal signage to help advance that pledge program. The OLWIPD is collaborating with municipal highway departments’ staff to identify and map suitable installation locations.
 - 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, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), and the City of Auburn are discussing developing common source water protection signage for lands acquired by both TNC and the City.

4. Tributary Level Sensors Installation Project

The OLWMC is working closely with the group Hyfi on the tributary level sensors installation project at watershed scale. These sensors present a relatively inexpensive, and temporally and spatially robust, alternative to USGS gauge stations. A formal subcontract was signed for the OLWMC to conduct the remaining installations. The grant subcontract is generating new revenue for the OLWMC. 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 storm event activity. A great many level sensor installations are expected throughout the Owasco Lake Watershed. Initial data outputs from the sensors are provided in the form of graphical time series showing level changes over time. DOT permits for the installation of sensors were gained for targeted locations along NYS roads. The OLWIPD and Hyfi will coordinate with the resident DOT engineer to accommodate these installations. Aside from the sensor replacement in Groton and Owasco Flats Retention Basin #2, planned installations are for NYSDOT locations over Sucker & Dutch Hollow brooks (Rt. 38A). Times series graphs of tributary levels gained from this project can now be accessed on the OLWMC website.

5. Funding Programs, OLWMC Budget, and Finances

- In partnership with the City of Auburn, and a proposed \$10,000 project-specific funding increase in their 2022 OLWMC budget, the OLWMC is planning to leverage the Great Lakes Commission's (GLC) Conservation Kick program that would offer a small pool of funding for producer-lead watershed conservation projects. Cayuga County Planning has been supportive with the provision of GIS raster data for the GLC priorities analysis.
- The CCSWCD, OLWMC, and City of Auburn are working with NYS Senator Mannion of the 50th District (that governs the city) to identify ways the 50th district can help with Owasco Lake protection and restoration needs. Leaders from these groups have proposed that an additional weed harvester would offer a multifaceted approach that could offer benefits to in lake nutrient removal, the removal of nuisance vegetation for lakeshore owners, and could be a shared tool among local lakes' SWCDs with jurisdiction.
- 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 OLWMC will be proposing for projects funding under the Great Lakes Sediment and Nutrient Reduction Grant program with the final proposal due mid-April. We will be requesting funding for the implementation of watershed riparian buffers, attempting to provide supportive funding according to the needs of the WRR update.
- 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 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 within the watershed, reduce the burden on local producers associated with new regulatory requirements, and help protect Owasco Lake. Senator Schumer's and Congressman Katko's offices prepared letters of endorsement for this project shared them directly with their contacts at NRCS.
- We are preparing the required information for a financial audit of the OLWMC for the 2020 calendar year.

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. 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 project along a watershed riparian corridor in the spring, 2021. The riparian buffer installation will occur along Veness Brook. Both groups will continue to develop the logistics for coordinating this effort over the next couple of months.

8. Future OLWMC Meetings

On April 20th, Dan Welch and Ron Kuck of CCE plan to offer an update presentation on CCE's land management programming, outreach, and education initiatives that help advance the protection of the watershed and Owasco Lake water resources. Their ability to communicate with producers and track status and needs may prove tremendously helpful for both communication and directing CCSWCD for farming planning, and possibly for identifying farms that might be interested in easements opportunities as part of a new farm plan or according to updated WRR requirements for the installation of riparian buffers along stream corridors.

9. 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, 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, 03/11/2021