



Owasco Lake Watershed Management Council

April 15, 2025, 10:00-11:30 AM
Auburn Memorial City Hall Chambers

Meeting of the Directors

Owasco – Ed Wagner, **Cayuga County** – Aileen McNabb -Coleman, **City of Auburn** – Ginny Kent, **Niles** – Joan Jayne, **Locke** – Thane Benson, **Scipio** – Nancy Hart, **Fleming** – Karen VanLiew, **Town of Moravia** – Terry Palmer, **Village of Moravia** –Chris Fulton, **Village of Groton** – Theodore Skibinski, **Summerhill** – Charlie Ripley, **Sennett** – Tom Blair, **Dryden** – Anne Clark, **Lansing** – Joseph Wetmore
Executive Director- Adam Effler

Presiding: Dr. Adam Effler

- A. Board of Directors Roll Call – Owasco-Ed Wagner, City of Auburn-Ginny Kent, Niles-Joan Jayne, Fleming-Karen VanLiew, Town of Moravia-Terry Palmer, Lansing-Joseph Wetmore. Ex-officio members attending Carol Sutkus, Gabriel Yerdon (online), Jesse Lloyd, Steve Fedrizzi (Cayuga Co Highway Department). Michelle Wunderlich, Angelina VanCamp
- B. Approval of the Agenda: Motion to approve the agenda made by Joan Jayne, seconded by Ginny Kent. Vote was unanimous. Motion carried.
- C. Approval of Minutes from March 18, 2025, Board Meeting as distributed via email: Motion to approve minutes made by Ginny Kent. Seconded by Joan Jayne. Vote was unanimous. Motion carried.
- D. Public to be Heard: Michelle Wunderlich announced the water quality monitoring buoy is now deployed and active on the lake.
- E. Director's Summary – Adam Effler (distributed for review prior to meeting)

For the audio/video presentation, please go to <https://www.olwmc.org/news>

Watershed Rules and Regulations

No new updates

Staff, Recognition, Awareness, Education and Outreach Projects

Project Updates:

- Staff are finalizing the Owasco Lake Watershed Inspection and Protection Division's (OLWIPD's) 2024 Annual Report and have allowed for document review by the Watershed Inspection Committee Members. Copies will be distributed to watershed municipal offices this spring. Elements of the report were delivered to the City of Auburn for inclusion within their 2024 Annual Water Report.
- The staff article published in Auburnpub on April 4, 2025, features the OLWMC's decision to acquire an additional land preserve in the Town of Venice and its increasing land

stewardship role within the watershed.

- The OLWIPD is working with Town of Fleming codes officers to require an erosion and sediment control plan for a construction site of concern. The group hopes that the site concern will provide a launching point for Fleming to further consider the OLWMC's draft Erosion and Sediment Control ordinance that was prepared for the town.
- As available staff will be attending municipal planning board meetings throughout the watershed for introductions and advocacy concerning erosion and sediment control planning for construction activities.
- We've requested the City of Auburn's annual proclamation in support of the 'Lake Friendly Living' initiative and pledge programming. In collaboration with OWLA, this year's Lake Friendly Living Awareness Day will be held on Saturday, May 17, 2025, from 10am - 1pm at Emerson Park where the public is welcome to help grow a rain garden, experience a water monitoring demonstration and observe a water sample.
- Staff presented on March 24, 2025, for the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry's (ESF's) 'Spring 2025 Water Science and Policy Seminar Series,' providing information about the OLWMC's operations and initiatives. Partnering ESF professors convened to discuss collaborations regarding the 2025 Owasco Lake tributary monitoring program.

Nine Element Watershed Plan (9EP)

Project Updates:

The City of Auburn selected an engineering firm for its Owasco Lake HUC 12 stream corridor assessments, according to the City of Auburn's recent NYS non-point non-agricultural planning grant award. This advancement was spotlighted in a Citizen article published on March 22, 2025.

During the March 26, 2025, 9E Coordination Committee meeting, the group engaged with Ducks Unlimited (DU). DU was recently awarded a \$252,436 grant to restore a wetland in the Owasco Flats Wildlife Management Area near the Town of Moravia. The project will provide habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife, help mitigate flood impacts downstream and improve water quality. The committee also discussed furthering the development of its progress report.

Watershed Lake and Tributary Monitoring

Projects Review:

- The Cayuga County Planning Department developed its 2025 lake and watershed monitoring and implementation priorities in the context of annual Finger Lakes Lake Ontario Watershed

Protection Alliance (FLOWPA) funding. As in 2024, they will include monitoring, data management, and implementation projects for Owasco Lake and its watershed. FLOWPA funds in 2025 will be used for:

- The installation and implementation of BMPs by SWCD
- O&M for the USGS Owasco Inlet Gage
- CSLAP for OWLA, Duck Lake Association and Lake Como Association
- OWLA Tributary Sampling Program
- Owasco Watershed Data Portal
- Public outreach and education on invasive species and water quality
- Aquatic vegetation harvesting
- O&M of the boat cleaning station at Emerson Park
- Support for the septic system inspection program

Project Update:

The Cayuga County Planning Department's Owasco Lake Tributary Sampling Project Quality Assurance Project Plan has been approved by the NYSDEC under NYS FLOWPA funding guidelines.

- Tributary sampling program review and training, hosted by CC Planning Department and OLWMC staff, was held on April 14, 2025. Sampling will begin on April 24, 2025.

- SUNY ESF is planning to supplement support for the Owasco Lake tributary monitoring program. They plan to collect and run alkalinity samples and estimate instantaneous discharge at sampling locations.
- The OLWMC endorsed proposal, *Characterization of PFAS in foam forming on the Finger Lakes*, was selected for funding by the Water Resources Institute. GAR is planning to develop and expand the 'foam reporting tool' in the spring of 2025. They hope to have it available for distribution to the community by early summer. The purpose is to start compiling more information about the prevalence and timing of foam formation on the Finger Lakes.

NYS-awarded Drinking Water Source Protection Program (DWSP2)

Project Review:

- In December 2024, on behalf of the Town of Lansing, OLWMC staff reviewed and provided feedback regarding the Southern Cayuga Lake Intermunicipal Water Commission's draft DWSP2 for Bolton Point, leveraging experience with developing both the City of Auburn's and Town of Owasco's DWSP2s. Staff engaged with the Commission on January 23, 2025, to discuss suggestions that were made.

Municipal Codes and Ordinances

No new updates

Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) Identification and Programming:

No new updates

Land Holdings

Fillmore Nature Preserve Project Update:

- TNC, NYSDEC, and OLWMC staff convened at the Fillmore Nature Preserve on April 9, 2025, for an opportunity to showcase the preserve to the NYSDEC, as a successful grant implementation towards land preservation and stewardship.
- OLWMC Staff are coordinating with the Cayuga County Planning Department to host a Cayuga County Water Quality Management Agency meeting at the Fillmore Nature Preserve.

Potential OLWMC Acquisitions Review:

- TNC has expressed interest in having the OLWMC own two properties poised for long term stewardship and preservation within the Owasco Lake watershed. TNC will present the remaining acquisition to the OLWMC Board for ownership and stewardship consideration.:
- 100-acre parcel in Groton, mixed farmland Potential

OLWMC Acquisitions Update:

- During its March 18 meeting, according to Resolution 01-2025, the OLWMC agreed to accept from TNC a transfer of a 72-acre parcel in Venice for the purposes of ownership and long-term stewardship.

Additional Partner Land Acquisitions/Targets Review:

- Under 2023 Round 19 of the Water Quality Improvement Projects (WQIP) Grant, the Finger Lakes Land Trust, Inc. (FLLT) received \$1,240,000 for Land Acquisition to Protect Owasco Lake. FLLT will work with landowners and partners in the Owasco Lake watershed to permanently protect approximately 500 acres through direct acquisition and the use of perpetual conservation easements. The program will focus on conservation and stewardship efforts to protect Owasco Lake. The proposed program grant will provide FLLT an opportunity to create a new nature preserve on the Sucker Brook wetland, one the largest remaining natural wetlands in the region and conserve additional lands throughout the Owasco Lake Watershed.
- The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and The Nature Conservancy announced the State's addition of 92 acres to Owasco Flats Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in the town of Moravia, Cayuga County. The acquisition more than doubles the size of the WMA

and offers new and enhanced public recreation opportunities.

Organizational Bylaws Update:

The OLWMC Members are underway with reviewing the final draft for proposed updated OLWMC bylaws.

Grant Projects and Funding

NFWF SOGL Project Update:

The OLWMC's request for a grant extension was approved, allowing the project team to complete remaining implementation features in the 2026 calendar year.

Relevant NYS Programming:

Newly Delineated Wetlands within the Owasco Lake Watershed Review:

NYSDEC released the new wetland data on January 13, 2025. The regulations implement new statutory requirements under the State's Freshwater Wetlands Act that will safeguard an estimated one million additional acres of wetland habitat. There are 11,910.59 acres (18.6 sq miles) of new delineated wetlands within the Owasco Lake watershed. Combined with the pre-existing National Wetlands Inventory data, there are 13,261.22 acres (20.7 sq miles) of wetlands in the Owasco Lake watershed.

Owasco Lake Impairment Listing Review:

The week of January 13, 2025, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) notified the NYSDEC that it is now required to designate Owasco Lake as an impaired water body due to HABs. Read more here: <https://www.epa.gov/tmdl/epas-addition-96-waterbodypollutant-combinations-new-york-2020-2022-303d-list>

Proposed Ambient Water Quality Guidance Values for Phosphorus Project Update:

The OLWMC was a signatory on a joint response to the public comment period for the NYSDEC's proposed ambient water quality guidance values for phosphorus. The response requested that NYS take a more aggressive approach towards reducing guidance values for NYS lakes by creating a framework for developing phosphorus standards.

Municipal Funding Opportunities Update (NYS Announcement in their words):

- For the **Inland Flooding and Local Waterfront Revitalization Program Implementation Projects grant** eligible communities include Sterling, Fair Haven, Village of Cayuga, Union Springs and lands within the Owasco Lake Watershed that are covered by the Owasco Lake Watershed Management Plan. An eligible applicant must have a complete or substantially complete LWRP or a Watershed Management Plan funded by NYS Department of State. "Implementation projects may include final design and engineering/construction, or construction to improve waterfront and watershed resiliency and reduce climate impacts including but not limited to: Projects that preserve, restore, and/or enhance natural landscapes that protect water quality and catalyze waterfront revitalization (Natural and nature-based shoreline stabilization, Living shorelines, Vegetated buffers, Culvert rightsizing, Natural sediment transport restoration, or Runoff reduction and/or reduction of watershed imperviousness and preservation of groundwater infiltration); Stormwater Management Projects that reduce localized flooding and / or provide resilience to impacts from increased precipitation and increased flooding due to climate change (Green Infrastructure such as rain gardens, bioretention areas, stormwater green streets, and porous pavement; and Stormwater retrofit projects); or Projects to make public facilities, including parks, trails, blueway trails, etc. more accessible and resilient to potential severe weather and flooding impacts including water quality improvements.

- Minimum State award is \$150,000
- Funding is 90% state with a 10% match (cash or in-kind)
- The County, Towns or Villages can be the applicant, and applicants can submit more than one application

Applications are due June 6, 2025, by 4:00pm via the CFA portal.

NYS Relevant Bills Review:

Finger Lakes Watershed Steward act (S7627/A8073): This bill will be redrafted to address the watershed rules and regulations issues for Owasco Lake Watershed.

PFAS disclosure act (S227/A3296): The US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has determined that there exists no safe level of PFAS, and legislators are proceeding with legislation to require a clear and concise procedure for testing of PFAS in wastewater discharges. This will require operators with a SPDES permit to disclose measured PFAS levels with the public.

Harmful algal bloom monitoring and prevention act (S8356/A8867): Reintroduced under the 2025 legislative session, under new print, NYS Senate bill S1833 Enacts the ‘Harmful Algal Bloom Monitoring and Prevention Act.’

Finger Lakes Commission (S7628): Legislators are discontinuing this bill with plans to prepare more comprehensive language for inclusion under the ‘watershed steward act.’

Protection for C streams (S1725/A4601): This bill has passed both houses over the last couple of years, only to be vetoed by the governor. Legislators are not pursuing this bill in the 2025 legislative session.

NYS Relevant Bills Update:

Concerning S8356 spearheaded by Senator May’s office, the Senator plans to submit requests for a HABS hearing to the majority leader in the Senate. Senator May is targeting mid-May for the hearing and preparing testimony for that initiative.

Municipality Buy-In 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, and Skaneateles.

- F. Board of Directors/Municipality Representatives Feedback: Ginny Kent asked for a clarification on water flow estimates and what is ‘good flow’. Dr. Effler explained this concept and its application in water quality and the difficulties in estimation of water flow. Bylaws committee is continuing to work on a more science-based approach. The Owasco Boat Launch managers are looking for watercraft stewards this year, and finances are secured for summer jobs for stewards this summer. They prefer the applicants be at least 18 years of age.
 - G. Treasurer’s Audit and Finance Report
 - i. March 2025 Financials Approval – Joan Jayne reported the financial report as of March 31, 2025, Total Current Assets \$372,111.72 and Total Liabilities and Equity \$429,560.44. Motion to approve the financial report made by Ed Wagner. Seconded by Terry Palmer. Vote was unanimous. Motion Carried.
 - ii. Awaiting results of official audit.
 - H. Lake Level Report — Current lake level is 712.49 ft elevation. The median level for this time of year is 712.64 according to USGS guidelines. John West is away.
 - I. Steve Fedrizzi – Road Salt Conservation by Cayuga County Highway Departments
- For the audio/video presentation, please go to <https://www.olwmc.org/news>

- J. NYSDEC FL Hub Update – Gabriel Yerdon reviewed grant programs, educational programs for the Finger Lakes and Great Lakes available through the DEC.

For the audio presentation, please go to <https://www.olwmc.org/news>

- K. Owasco Watershed Lake Association Update – Carol Sutkus-OWLA is working on the Lake Friendly Living Awareness Day on May 17, 2025; Stream monitoring training has begun, and stream monitoring will commence next week. The Association is starting to plan the annual meeting for June 18, at the Owasco Yacht Club.

- L. Cornell Cooperative Extension Update – unavailable

- M. Watershed Inspection Monthly Report – Jesse Lloyd

For the audio/video presentation, please go to <https://www.olwmc.org/news>

- N. Communications: Ed Wagner invited people for a tour of the Fillmore Nature Preserve once the trails are cleared. Terry Palmer mentioned that Moravia School children will help with trail clearing. Adam reminded the Council that next month's the meeting with be help in the 3d floor training room in Auburn Memorial City Hall due to a scheduling conflict with the current venue.

- O. Issues of Concern: None Heard

- P. Next Meeting will be Tuesday of May 20, 2025, at 10:00 AM at Auburn Memorial City Hall **third floor training room.**

- Q. Adjourn: Motion to adjourn made by Terry Palmer. Vote was unanimous. Meeting adjourned at 11:22 AM.

Respectfully submitted,
Vivian Cunningham

