



Owasco Lake Watershed Management Council

February 18, 2025, 10:00-11:30 AM

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: City of Auburn-Ginny Kent, Niles-Joan Jayne, Scipio-Nancy Hart, Fleming-Karen VanLiew, Town of Moravia-Terry Palmer, Dryden-Anne Clark (online), Ex-Officio: John West, Emily Cummings, Erika Towne, Doug Young, Lexie Davis, Carol Sutkus, Frank Clarke, Jessie Lloyd, Abby Hai
- B. Approval of the Agenda: Motion to approve made by Joan Jayne, seconded by Terry Palmer. Vote was unanimous. Motion carried.
- C. Approval of Minutes from January 21, 2025, Board Meeting as distributed via email: Motion to approve made by Nancy Hart, seconded by Ginny Kent. Vote was unanimous. Motion carried.
- D. Public to be Heard: None heard
- E. Director's Summary – Adam Effler (distributed for review prior to meeting). For an audio/video of this presentation please visit <https://www.olwmc.org/news>
Watershed Rules and Regulations

Project Update:

- A request for an oral hearing of the Article 78 petitions was made for mid-May, 2025.
- The January 27, 2025 Porceng article linked [here](#), references the Owasco Lake Green Amendment as it pertains to Owasco Lake WRR litigation with the NYSDOH.

Staff, Recognition, Awareness, Education and Outreach Project Updates

- The staff feature article with the Auburn Pub, led by Jesse Lloyd and published on February 11, 2025, spotlighted emerging contaminants that threaten drinking water in the Finger Lakes.
- A staff presentation scheduled for March 24, 2025 at the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry's 'Spring 2025 Water Science and Policy Seminar Series' will provide information about the OLWMC's operations and initiatives.
- Staff are developing the Owasco Lake Watershed Inspection and Protection Division's 2024 Annual Report that will be distributed to the watershed municipal offices in the spring. Elements of the report will also be delivered to the City of Auburn for inclusion within their 2024 Annual Water Report.
- Lake Friendly Living Coalition member and Canandaigua Lake watershed steward, the Canandaigua

Lake Watershed Association, plans to share watershed education curricula developed under their recent NYS grant award.

- Staff will be presenting at the March 8, 2025 Bob Brower scientific symposium, featuring topics including 9EP implementation and OLWIPD roles and public services.

Nine Element Watershed Plan (9EP)

Project Update

- The 9E Coordination Committee continues to advance ongoing grant projects and programming and has scheduled its next meeting for March 26, 2025.

Watershed Lake and Tributary Monitoring

Projects Update:

On February 12, 2025, local partnering organizations, SUNY ESF analysts, and Sustain Our Great Lakes program (i.e., Owasco Inlet streambank stabilization) project partners convened to discuss the approach for 2025 Owasco Lake tributary monitoring in the context of future 9EP SWAT calibrations and grant project monitoring.

Land Holdings

Fillmore Nature Preserve Project Update:

The 2024 Annual Property Inspection Report for the Fillmore Nature Preserve is now complete.

Potential OLWMC Acquisitions Review:

- On June 14, 2023, the NYSDEC announced that New York State, in partnership with The Nature Conservancy, permanently protected two environmentally sensitive parcels of open space in Cayuga County. A 203-acre addition to Fillmore Glen State Park in Moravia and 72 acres of forested wetlands in Venice were preserved. Both projects were funded through the State Department of Environmental Conservation's Water Quality Improvement Project program to protect the water quality in Owasco Lake Watershed.

- TNC has expressed interest in having the OLWMC own and steward two properties poised for preservation within the Owasco Lake watershed. TNC will present these acquisitions to the OLWMC Board for ownership and stewardship consideration. The acquisitions include:

- 72-acre parcel in Venice, dense wetland
- 100-acre parcel in Groton, mixed farmland

○ Potential OLWMC Acquisitions Update:

Olivia Green, Freshwater Resiliency Specialist for TNC, will present details about the Mandan property in the Town of Venice for which TNC will be gauging the OLWMC's interest in ownership and stewardship. The property contains an expansive wetlands complex. TNC would be looking to close on the transfer of the property to the OLWMC by the end of June, 2025 (i.e., prior to the end of their fiscal year). An inquiry was made with the OLWMC's property liability insurance carrier regarding additional premiums associated with the acquisition, which are expected to be negligible. An associated resolution will be prepared for the OLWMC to consider, subsequent to TNC's presentation.

Additional Partner Land Acquisitions/Targets Review:

- Under 2023 Round 19 of the Water Quality Improvement Projects (WQIP) Grant, the Fingers 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 FLLT offered to provide support to conserve the Camp Casowasco property. Depending on the owner's interests and goals, in partnership, the FLLT and OLWMC could help broker an easement or acquisition deal to help protect the parcel, and possibly, restore the building space.

Organizational Bylaws Update

The OLWMC are underway with review and revisions of the OLWMC's existing bylaws.

Grant Projects and Funding

- EA Engineering, navigated the environmental permitting process and design, in preparation for project implementation during the 2025 field season. They completed drafts of the NEPA, ESA, and NHPA compliance forms and submitted them to the NFWF.
- EA Engineering developed a computer-aided design (CAD) model for the project. Additionally, they started utilizing a hydrologic model to estimate flow conditions that will inform their project designs. The one-dimensional model utilizes geometry and flow inputs (i.e., using historic USGS gauge data) and will output velocities and water surface elevations. This information is helping the engineering firm recommend materials and placements to the Cayuga County Soil and Water Conservation District (CCSWCD), which is contracted for project implementation.
- The project team met on August 9, 2024 to review preliminary design recommendations. EA Engineering screened the stabilization alternatives for Sites 1-6. Each site has stationed cross- sections where the channel velocities and shear stresses were calculated for the 2-year and 100- year flow events.
- Of the alternatives where the permissible shear stress/velocity is within an acceptable range, CCSWCD informed the designers of which bioengineering alternatives they would like EA Engineering to focus on incorporating into the design. In response, CCSWCD shared a variety of nature-based stabilization techniques that they recommend and are comfortable using for streambank stabilization projects.
- The project team received regulatory approvals from the US Fish and Wildlife Service to submit for project reimbursements and, ultimately, get underway with construction.
- An additional project update report was submitted, as required, to the NFWF on November 11, 2024.
- EA Engineering is developing the required NYSDEC and US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) project permit application package, which includes the Nationwide Permit 13, 27 and 401 water quality certifications.
- The existing conditions and 60% design set is complete and was submitted to CCSWCD and OLWMC staff in December of 2024 for review. Designers are adapting to site-specific constraints.

NFWF SOGL Project Update:

- The project team is on track to implement the streambank restoration project in the summer of 2025, following construction permitting restrictions due to trout spawning in the spring.
- The OLWMC requested a grant extension from the originally proposed deadline of fall 2025, to a new deadline of fall 2026. The extension is necessary for project completion due to project schedule delays associated with NYS agency permitting.

Relevant NYS Programming:

Newly Delineated Wetlands within the Owasco Lake Watershed

Project 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.

Review of Proposed Ambient Water Quality Guidance Values for Phosphorus (in their words)

DEC Interim Commissioner Sean Mahar has announced the release of draft water quality guidance values to regulate phosphorus in New York State surface waters. Excess phosphorus can contribute to harmful algal blooms (HABs), lower dissolved oxygen levels, increased turbidity, and excessive growth of algae and aquatic plants. The draft guidance values are supplemented by draft updates to DEC's phosphorus permitting strategy and establish a process for prioritizing and reducing phosphorus loads from wastewater treatment plants.

Review of Request for Immediate Rulemaking for On-site Treatment and Disposal of Landfill Leachate

A request letter was signed and delivered to Sean Mahar, Acting Commissioner, NYSDEC to urge the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to immediately initiate the rulemaking process to establish new regulations under 6 NYCRR Parts 360 & 363 regarding the effective management, treatment, and disposal of landfill leachate.

Municipal Funding Opportunities (In their words)

More Than \$16 Million – Largest Ever Awarded – in Climate Smart Communities Grant Awards

On December 23, 2024, DEC announced more than \$16 million in Climate Smart Communities Grant awards to municipalities across the state... The grant awards represent the largest ever awarded since the program was created thanks to funding from the Clean Water, Clean Air and Green Jobs Environmental Bond Act. The funded projects will help New York advance the emission-reduction targets under the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (Climate Act) and support local projects to reduce pollution, decrease flood risk, improve infrastructure, and enhance climate resilience in communities.

List of 2024 Climate Smart Communities grant awards. More information on the grant program can be found on DEC's Grants For Climate Action webpage.

Reminder: Application Deadline for Zero-Emission Vehicle Infrastructure Grant Program (In their words)

DEC's Municipal Zero-Emission Vehicle Infrastructure Grant program, which provides grants to cities, towns, villages and counties to install hydrogen fuel filling station components and direct current fast charge electric vehicle supply equipment for public use, is accepting applications until 4 p.m. on February 28, 2025, through the Consolidated Funding Application (CFA) website.

Find more information about the grant program for zero-emission vehicle infrastructure.

Review of WQIP Award Citizen article excerpt by Robert Harding, December 24, 2024:

NYS awards \$1.2M for four Cayuga County water quality projects

A salt storage facility, shoreline stabilization and wetland restoration are among the Cayuga County projects that will be supported by more than \$1.2 million in funding through the state's regional economic development council initiative. The largest of the grants (\$600,000) was awarded to the town of Scipio for a new salt storage facility, which will replace the current structure that is leaking and undersized. According to the project's summary, the new salt storage building will protect groundwater near Salmon Creek, which is a Cayuga Lake tributary. The Cayuga County Soil and Water Conservation District will receive \$400,000 for a shoreline stabilization project in the towns of Aurelius and Springport. The project will reduce erosion and nutrient loading, while protecting 3,000 feet of shoreline in the two towns. Ducks Unlimited, a nonprofit organization that focuses on wetland conservation, will receive \$252,436 for a wetland restoration project in the Owasco Flats Wildlife Management Area near Moravia. The project aims to provide a habitat for migratory birds and other wildlife. It will also bolster flood mitigation in the area and improve water quality.

NYS DEC Programming Update:

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>

NYS Recognition and Relevant Bills

Project Review:

- NYS Senator Rachel May and Assemblymember Anna Kelles provided an update on the status of legislative bills during the Cayuga Lake Watershed Intermunicipal meeting held the evening of November 20, 2024:

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.’

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, and Skaneateles.

- F. Board of Directors/Municipality Representatives Feedback: None heard.
- G. Treasurer’s Audit and Finance Report
- January 2025 Financials Approval – Joan Jayne reported that as of January 31, 2025. Total checking and Savings \$395,823.92, Total current assets were \$397,523.92 and Total liabilities and Equity were \$456,285.02. Motion to approve financial report made by Terry Palmer seconded by Ginny Hart. Vote was unanimous. Motion carried. Dr. Effler noted that interest on CDs is now shown on financial reports. All required financial documents have been submitted for audit and proforma budget preparation.
- H. Lake Level Report – John West- Owasco Lake elevation is 709.89 ft. running from 705-709. Heading into March-April he anticipates lake level rising so will probably bring down the lake level prior to a spring melt. He continues to closely monitor the lake levels.
- I. Owasco Inlet Streambank Stabilization Project Design – Emily Cummings and Erika Towne from EA Engineering and Geology. PC. Overview of NFWF/SOGL project with CCSWCD and CCPD. For an audio/video of this important presentation please visit <https://www.olwmc.org/news>
- J. Owasco Lake Mussel Survey Report – Doug Young For an audio/video of this presentation please visit <https://www.olwmc.org/news>
- K. NYSDEC FL Hub Update –Lexie Davis-reported there are National Environmental Education Foundation grants for 1 year funding opportunities. Grants are available for avian influenzas research in waterfowl for the Finger Lakes and drafts for guidance for phosphorus levels for the Finger Lakes. For an audio of this update please visit <https://www.olwmc.org/news>
- L. Owasco Watershed Lake Association Update – Carol Sutkus-planning is continuing for the Bob Brower Scientific Symposium on Saturday March 8, 2025, at Auburn Public Theater in person or online. Need to register and is free to attend. Register at OWLA.

- M. Cornell Cooperative Extension Update –Frank Clarke- upcoming 4 H public presentations day to develop presentation skills, 2/25 tractor safety certification for youth, Cayuga Co dairy day 2/26 for upcoming growing season, planning for Cayuga Co fair and cattle weigh in, 3/17-18 agricultural shop meeting planned.
- N. Watershed Inspection Monthly Report – Jesse Lloyd For an audio/video of this presentation please visit <https://www.olwmc.org/news>
- O. Communications: Next month The Nature Conservancy will present the Venice proposed land transfer.
- P. Issues of Concern: None heard.
- Q. Next Meeting is March 18, 2025, at 10:00AM at Auburn City Hall and online.
- R. Adjourn: Motion to adjourn made at 11: 18 AM made by Nancy Hart and seconded by Joan Jayne. Vote was unanimous. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Vivian Cunningham

