



# Owasco Lake Watershed Management Council

December 17, 2024, 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: Owasco-Ed Wagner, City of Auburn-Ginny Kent, Niles-Joan Jayne, Scipio-Nancy Hart, Fleming-Karen VanLiew, Town of Moravia-Terry Palmer, Dryden-Anne Clark (online), Lansing-Joseph Wetmore. Ex Officio: John West, Jennifer Goff, Aaron Ninokawa, Christine Georgakakos, Tony Prestigiacomio, Carol Sutkus, Daniel Welch/Frank Clarke, Jesse Lloyd, Michele Wunderlich, Janice Degni, Ryan Staychock
- B. Approval of the Agenda: Motion to approve made by Karen VanLiew. Seconded by Joan Jayne. Vote was unanimous, motion carried.
- C. Approval of Minutes from November 19, 2024, Board Meeting as distributed via email. Motion to approve made by Ginny Kent. Seconded by Joan Jayne. 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:

The City of Auburn, the Town of Owasco, and OWLA filed a new lawsuit on November 22, 2024, to help ensure that NYS Department of Health fulfills its duties for protecting NYS watersheds.

The new Article 78 lawsuit responds to the NYS Department of Health's recent decision that new rules and regulations are not necessary to protect Owasco Lake drinking water, wherein New York State failed to provide data or information to support its decision to terminate the rulemaking process. The new Article 78 petition filed in the Cayuga County Supreme Court challenges the Department's decision to deny the City of Auburn and Town of Owasco's request to regulate the Owasco Lake watershed for the expressed purpose of protecting Owasco Lake's water quality. Under NYS Public Health Law, the NYS Department of Health is responsible to support the advancement of watershed rules and regulations for the protection of water supplies. The first court date has been scheduled for January 2, 2025, at 9:45 am before Judge Budelmann at the Cayuga County Courthouse.

### Staff, Recognition, Awareness, Education and Outreach Project Updates

- The OLWMC’s staff feature article published with the Citizen on December 13, 2024,

featured road salt use and associated best practices for protecting water quality. Jesse Lloyd's article was selected as a 'top story and editor's pick.'

- The staff contribution to the Cayuga County Water Quality Management Agency newsletter was coauthored with the Cayuga County Planning Department and featured the Fillmore Nature Preserve's grand opening held on November 7, 2024.
- The OLWMC and OWLA collaborated to give a watershed protection educational booth at the Cayuga Community College Craft Fair, held from December 7-8, 2024. Thank you to Nancy Hart and Carol Sutkus for making that happen for both organizations.
- Union Springs Middle School students wrote essays about invasive species and their impacts following the OLWMC's and Cayuga County Planning Department's collaboration to educate students during the Cayuga County Soil and Water Conservation Districts 'Conservation Field Days' earlier this year.
- Staff have been engaging with a Cornell University Master of Professional Science student who plans to focus their capstone on applying communication strategies to advance water quality protection among community organizations. The student plans to develop a communication strategy to increase engagement between stakeholders and water quality managers. The student plans to consider land use activities, current inter-agency coordination, and externalities to map out a benchmark.
- Staff will be presenting at the March 8, 2025, Bob Brower scientific symposium, featuring topics including 9E implementation and OLWIPD roles and public services.

#### Nine Element Watershed Plan (9EP)

##### Project Update:

- The 9E Coordination Committee will be developing a 2024 report to feature the 9EP projects and programs that have been advanced over the course of the last year.
- The committee continues to advance ongoing grant projects and programming and has scheduled its next meeting for January 22, 2024.

#### Watershed Lake and Tributary Monitoring

##### Owasco Lake Tributary Monitoring Project Update:

- The Cayuga County Planning Department drafted a data usability assessment report (DUAR) and final 2024 tributary monitoring project report for review among partners and submittal for further review and approval by the NYSDEC.
- SUNY ESF professors and students are interested in characterizing the relationship between freshwater sponges and various water quality parameters in New York, including in the Finger Lakes Region. Their proposed project includes the determination of where the sponges currently exist, and the development of an outreach component to train community members on sponge identification for help with their search. OLWMC staff and OWLA volunteers are considering providing support for the research project on Owasco Lake.

#### NYS-awarded Drinking Water Source Protection Program (DWSP2)

##### Project Review:

- Based on NYS's decision to terminate amendments to 10 NYCRR Part 104.1 City of Auburn and Town of Owasco Watershed Rules and Regulations, the amendments being a recommendation included within the draft City of Auburn DWSP2, that feature was removed from

the plan, allowing the plan to move forward to completion. The project Community Advisory Group met with project consultants on August 14, 2024, to review final details of the draft plan.

- The project Community Advisory Group is finalizing changes to the DWSP2 for transmittal to, and approval by, NYS. Among other recent changes, the group is including the Owasco Lake Watershed Agricultural Program concept within the proposed plan for the prospect of NYS funding the farmer-driven program in coming years.

#### Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) Identification and Programming:

##### Update:

The 2024 HABs reporting and notification season has ended. The New York Harmful Algal Bloom System (NYHABS) link will be unavailable until the 2025 season begins in May.

##### Land Holdings

##### Fillmore Nature Preserve Project Update:

On December 10, 2024, additional signage was installed to better guide visitors to the trail system.

#### Federal and NYS Grant Projects and Funding

##### National Fish and Wildlife Foundation SOGL Project Update:

- The existing conditions and 30% design set are complete and were submitted to CCSWCD and OLWMC staff in October 2024 for review. The digital elevation model and HEC-RAS modeling and verification were submitted during 30% design phase.
- Additional surveying work was completed by CCSWCD on November 8, 2024, as required to work towards the 60% engineering design set. The 60% design set, that includes new features based on feedback from the CCSWCD, is underway and expected for review on December 20, 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.

##### NYS Funding Update:

- A OLWMC letter of support was prepared and delivered for Finger Lakes PRISM's proposal to continue to administer the Finger Lakes PRISM program, an approximate four-year contract with NYSDEC.
- On December 11, 2024, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) released for public review and comment draft eligibility guidelines to implement funding under the Clean Water, Clean Air and Green Jobs Environmental Bond Act of 2022 (Bond Act).
- The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) announced \$15 million is now available through the new Community Reforestation (CoRe) Grant Program to expand, restore, and create urban forested natural areas. The funding helps fulfill the 2024 State of the State "25 Million Trees Initiative" launched by Governor Hochul to recognize the importance of trees and forests for climate resiliency and community health. The State of the State commitment included a \$15 million appropriation for competitive grants supporting resilient reforestation.

## NYS Recognition and Relevant Bills

### Project Update:

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):** This bill is under revision and awaiting multi-agency feedback

**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.

### 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: Joseph Wetmore had questions regarding difference between NYS DEC and Federal EPA regulations on PFAS. Ginny Kent questioned if Cornell University is working with only Owasco or with other lakes as well on freshwater sponges.
- G. Treasurer’s Audit and Finance Report
  - i. November 2024 Financials Approval – Joan Jayne reported as of November 30, 2024, Total Current Assets -\$383,341.70: Total Assets-\$443,435.18, and Total Liabilities and Equity \$443,435.218. Motion to approve made by Joseph Wetmore. Motion seconded by Nancy Hart. Vote was unanimous, motion carried.
  - ii. 2024 Financial Audit will be done. NYS controller office notified us they have received our 2023 tax filing.
- H. Lake Level Report – John West reported the current lake elevation at 710.76 ft. He will continue to monitor and reduce the level this weekend.
- I. 2024 Owasco Lake and Tributary Data Analysis – Jennifer Goff, Aaron Ninokawa, Christine Georgakakos (Doctorate Assistant Professors, SUNY-ESF) presented an analysis of Owasco Lake tributary sediment as collected by OWLA. For an audio/video of this presentation, please visit <https://www.olwmc.org/news>
- J. NYSDEC FL Hub Update – Tony Prestigiacoamo left a memo that NYS DEC PFAS regulations are available online.

- K. Owasco Watershed Lake Association Update – Carol Sutkus reported on the progress toward the Bob Brower symposium 3/8/2025, information table at the craft fair at the Cayuga Community College, received a memo from the NYS DOH regarding existing Watershed Rules and Regulation, and filed an Article 78 lawsuit with Village of Owasco on WRR.
- L. Cornell Cooperative Extension Update –unavailable.
- M. Watershed Inspection Monthly Report – Jesse Lloyd. For and audio/video of the watershed inspection monthly report, please visit <https://www.olwmc.org/news>
- N. Communications: Upcoming OLWMC meeting presentation: Owasco restoration project and Nature conservancy and property transfer considerations. Dr. Effler asked Directors to review and consider changes for the 2025 OLMC objectives. These will be discussed next month.
- O. Issues of Concern: None heard
- P. Next Meeting: January 21, 2025, at 10:00 AM.
- Q. Adjourn: Motion to adjourn made by Joseph Wetmore. Seconded by Ed Wagner. Vote was unanimous, motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 11:24 AM

Respectfully submitted,

Vivian Cunningham