

Town of Lenox, Madison County

The Town of Lenox is located in Madison County. The northern portion of the town borders Oneida Lake and Oneida Creek defines the eastern border. Lenox has approximately 3.2 miles of shoreline on Oneida Lake and contains two incorporated villages – Wampsville, which serves as the Madison County seat, and Canastota. The town encompasses 36.4 square miles of land area, 100% of which lies within the Oneida Lake watershed. Primary development is found along Route 5 and along the Oneida Lake shoreline.

The northern half of Lenox, located in the Erie Ontario Plain, is characterized by flat terrain, productive soils, and high groundwater levels. The southern portion of the town is located in the Appalachian Uplands, which has a hillier terrain. A portion of the wetlands in Lenox was artificially drained in the 1800s for agricultural purposes. Agriculture plays a dominant role in Lenox and throughout Madison County, which is ranked 11th in total milk production for New York State. In addition, potatoes, onions, celery, and other cash crops are grown on muck soil in the northern part of the town. Oneida Creek has good water quality and is bordered by unique wetlands of state and national significance, and quality surficial aquifers.

According to the US Census, the Town of Lenox had 8,665 people in 2000 and the town experienced a .5% population increase between 1990 and 2000. The estimated population in July 2005 was 8,790. In 2000, the median age in Lenox was 38 years and the average household size was 2.5 persons. Median household income was \$38,491. There were 3,877 housing units in the town, 6.6% of which were built between 1990 and 2000.

Assessment Results

Water in Lenox is supplied by the Onondaga County Water Authority (OCWA) and the City of Oneida. The surface water supplies are located outside of the County (Lake Ontario and the City of Oneida reservoir in Oneida County which is supplied by Florence Creek, a tributary to the East Branch of Fish Creek). Up to 72 percent of the housing units are served by private wells. The Madison County Health Department has groundwater quality data for supplies monitored by Health Department programs (food services and drinking water systems).

Contaminants of concern in this area are total coliform and nitrates, usually caused by septic systems and agriculture runoff. Several businesses in Lenox disinfect their water because they have exceeded MCL limits for bacteria in the past. Other wells in the area experience high sulfur content but this condition poses an aesthetic concern, not a health threat.

Flooding occurs in the areas surrounding Oneida Lake after major storm events or rapid snow and ice thaws. The impact associated with annual snowmelt is a driving force on high water levels. The Zoning Enforcement Officer is responsible for granting or denying flood plain development permits. Areas of special flood hazard have been identified by the Federal Emergency Management Agency in a scientific and engineering report called, "Flood Insurance Study, Town of Lenox New York, Madison County".

Many Lenox homeowners are members of the Oneida Lake Association that was founded in 1945 to protect, restore and preserve the natural resources of the lake and its surrounding

ecosystem. Community leaders in Lenox also participated in the development of recommendations for the “Management Strategy for Oneida Lake and its Watershed”.

| Town of Lenox | Full or Partial Implementation | Not Applicable |
|---|--|-----------------------|
| 1. Development - total 1a. Existing 1b. New and substantial redevelopment | 20 of 42 (48%) 11 of 20 (55%) 9 of 22 (41%) | 0 0 0 |
| 2. Forestry / Agriculture - total 2a. Forestry 2b. Agriculture | 9 of 12 (75%) 8 of 10 (80%) 1 of 2 (50%) | 0 0 0 |
| 3. Waterways / Wetlands - total 3a. Modified waterways 3b. Wetlands and Riparian Area Mgmt/Restoration | 15 of 16 (94%) 9 of 10 (90%) 6 of 6 (100%) | 0 0 0 |
| 4. Marinas - total 4a. Existing Marinas 4b. New Marinas 4c. Existing and New Marinas | 5 of 48 (10%) 3 of 20 (15%) 0 of 18 (0%) 2 of 10 (20%) | 26 0 18 8 |
| 5. Roads and Bridges - total 5a. New Roads and Bridges 5b. Existing Roads and Bridges 5c. New & Existing Roads & Bridges | 23 of 26 (88%) 6 of 6 (100%) 13 of 13 (100%) 4 of 7 (57%) | 2 0 0 2 |
| 6. OWTS | 6 of 7(86%) | 0 |

Summary and Recommendations

Lenox has several laws in place that protect water quality in the Oneida Lake watershed, including zoning, subdivision, and site plan reviews. Onsite septic ordinances and sewer districts (South Shore and south of Route 5 in Canastota) are available. A Comprehensive Plan was developed in 1971 and was later updated in 1993. Subdivision regulations for major and minor projects are defined by SEQR. Zoning laws, including conservation and overlay zones, are defined in the Town Code. Sewers are covered in articles II and III of the town law. Lenox is currently dealing with federal wetland designations and related impacts on municipal practices. The CNY RPDB recommends a greater emphasis on communication between the Town and federal agencies regarding wetland designation.

In response to flooding issues, Lenox is currently working with consultants, the Village of Canastota, and the Town of Lincoln on plans to re-route water flow away from the Village. Management of Oneida Lake for flood control either directly or indirectly also involves several local, state, and federal agencies, including the NYS Canal Corporation, the NYS DEC, and US Federal Emergency Management Agency, the US Army Corps of Engineers, and shoreline communities such as Lenox.

Based on the assessment process, the CNY RPDB recommends that Lenox adopt sections of a model stormwater management law in order to further reduce the impacts of flooding and the amount of construction site and post construction runoff. Many New York State communities use stormwater controls as an effective way to ensure no net increase in runoff from construction activities. Regulation of stormwater runoff discharges from construction activities will reduce stormwater runoff rates and volumes, soil erosion, stream channel erosion, and nonpoint source pollution. Stormwater management laws could also strengthen plans for re-routing water flow away from the Village. The law requiring construction and post-construction stormwater controls could compliment the engineered solution while helping to prevent additional problems in the future. New York State recommends that every community, whether or not its regulated under the MS4 program, adopt a stormwater management local law under the Municipal Home Rule Law.

A model law for Stormwater Management and Sediment and Erosion Control which has been endorsed by the NYS DEC and the NYS DOS is available in Appendix G. Additional information is available in the Genesee Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council resource titled, "Protecting Water Resources Through Local Controls and Practices: An Assessment Manual for New York Municipalities" and a 2004 DEC/DOS publication called, "Stormwater Management Guidance Manual for Local Officials."

Municipalities have authority and primary responsibility for local roadway, bridge, and drainage maintenance. The CNY RPDB recommends that municipalities continue to implement stormwater controls and provide educational opportunities to update highway and public works department staff on current road, bridge, and drainage BMPs. Additional recommendations are found in a section titled "Road, Drainage Way, and Bridge Recommendations" (IV B) of the introductory narrative.

Municipal Contacts

- Richard Stagnitti, Town Code Enforcement Officer
- Rocco DiVeronica, Town Supervisor
- Geoff Snyder, Madison County Department of Environmental Health
- Jack Miller, Madison County Planning Department

Local Laws Reviewed

- Code of the Town of Lenox
- Zoning regulations
- Subdivision regulations
- Comprehensive Master Plan, Town of Lenox (drafted in 1971)
- Town of Lenox zoning map