

Town of Sullivan, Madison County

The Town of Sullivan is situated in the northern portion of Madison County and along the southern shoreline of Oneida Lake. The town encompasses 73.36 square miles of land area, 100% of which lies within the Oneida Lake watershed. The Village of Chittenango is located in the southern half of the Town. Sullivan has approximately 7.2 miles of shoreline on Oneida Lake. This shoreline and a section of Chittenango Creek were designated as Priority Septic Areas in the 2004 "Management Strategy for Oneida Lake and its Watershed." These areas have current, known problems with non-point source pollution from failing on-site septic systems. Recommendations found in the Management Strategy are primarily designed for these priority areas.

According to the US Census, the Town of Sullivan had 14,991 people in 2000. The town experienced a 2.5% population increase between 1990 and 2000. The median age in Sullivan at that time was 38 years and the average household size was 2.6 persons. Median household income was \$44,468. There were 6,209 housing units in the town in 2000, 10% of which had been built since 1990.

Assessment Results

Town of Sullivan	Full or Partial Implementation	Not Applicable
1. Development - total	33 of 42 (79%)	0
1a. Existing	13 of 20 (65%)	0
1b. New and substantial redevelopment	20 of 22 (91%)	0
2. Forestry / Agriculture - total	8 of 12 (67%)	3
2a. Forestry	7 of 10 (70%)	3
2b. Agriculture	1 of 2 (50%)	0
3. Waterways / Wetlands - total	15 of 16 (94%)	0
3a. Modified waterways	9 of 10 (90%)	0
3b. Wetlands and Riparian Area Mgmt/Restoration	6 of 6 (100%)	0
4. Marinas - total	4 of 48 (8%)	0
4a. Existing Marinas	4 of 20 (20%)	0
4b. New Marinas	0 of 18 (0%)	0
4c. Existing and New Marinas	0 of 10 (0%)	0
5. Roads and Bridges - total	24 of 26 (92%)	1
5a. New Roads and Bridges	6 of 6 (100%)	0
5b. Existing Roads and Bridges	12 of 13 (92%)	0
5c. New & Existing Roads & Bridges	6 of 7 (86%)	1
OWTS	6 of 7(86%)	1

Sullivan has several laws in place that help to regulate the water quality of Oneida Lake, including zoning, subdivision, and site plan review. The town's comprehensive plan was updated in 2006 and the Town is planning to adopt the NYS model Stormwater Management and Erosion and Sediment Control law in compliance with the NYS SPDES Stormwater Phase II Permit requirements.

The town requires all new septic systems to be designed and sited by a professional engineer and the Town Board has the authority to approve or deny conventional septic systems. Non-traditional septic systems go through the county review process. Town officials estimate that up to 500 new homes will be constructed in the Town over the next few years and all of them will be built with on-site systems.

Town officials have observed a growing trend to convert existing seasonal residences along the lakeshore into year round structures. Landowners occasionally purchase adjacent lots and replace the existing, individual seasonal structures with a single, large year-round residence. These large homes often fill the lot, leaving limited space to properly site and install proper septic systems. The potential for failed systems is aggravated by the high water table and tightly packed soils.

Town officials recognize the need for sewer service along Route 31 to accommodate current and future businesses and homes. Some parcels in the Lakeport area may be rezoned in the next few years to accommodate commercial development. The Town has secured partial funding for a sewer district in the Lakeport area that will service 43 residences.

Sullivan recently proposed expanding the sewer district to serve up to an additional 700 homes near Route 31 between Lakeport and the Onondaga County border. Town officials have applied for state and federal grants to fund the expanded a sewer district but there is no firm timeline for completing this project.

A "Lakeside Plan" was developed in 1996 for the hamlet of Lakeport as part of the Canal Corridor Initiative but the plan was never fully adopted. In 1994 the State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation released the "Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan". This document was not legislatively binding but provides policy goals for the Oneida Lake communities including recreation, commercial marinas, and open space preservation.

The Town of Sullivan Waterfront Consistency Law was written in 1999 as part of the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP). This was developed to achieve a balance between population growth, economic development, and preservation of natural resources in shoreline areas. The "Draft Town of Sullivan Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan" contains topics such as sewage disposal systems, solid waste disposal, transportation, recreation, water quality environmental sensitive features, fish resources, scenic vistas, zoning, and wetlands.

In response to extensive flooding in January 1996, the Madison County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) researched the causes of flooding in the Lower Chittenango Creek subwatershed. In 1997, a program was initiated to correct the problem by removing logjams from the Creek. Since 1997 Madison County SWCD has had an agreement with the

Towns of Sullivan, Manlius, and Cicero to remove logjams from the Creek in order to reduce flooding.

Many Sullivan homeowners are members of the Oneida Lake Association (OLA) that was founded in 1945 to protect, restore and preserve the natural resources of the lake and its surrounding ecosystem. OLA members work to maintain good water quality, a renewable supply of game fish, and increased access to the lake. Community leaders in Sullivan also took a leading role in the development of recommendations for the “Management Strategy for Oneida Lake and its Watershed”.

Summary and Recommendations

County and state health department laws regulate on-site wastewater treatment systems, but municipalities have the authority to offer an additional level of regulation. The management practices identified by the NYS DOS as indicators of good onsite system management are being addressed in the town but local control for these measures is not fully addressed in current zoning or subdivision laws. As a result, municipal officials lack the authority to enforce maintenance and inspection practices necessary to ensure adequate septic function.

Given the natural, physical conditions that exist within the town, coupled with funding uncertainties and potential delays associated with the formation of sewer districts, the CNY RPDB recommends that additional regulations be developed to encourage regular inspections and maintenance of onsite wastewater treatment systems in areas not served by public sewer systems. A uniform onsite wastewater management model law is found in Appendix G and additional information is available in the Genesee Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council publication called, “Protecting Water Resources Through Local Controls and Practices: An Assessment Manual for New York Municipalities.” Sullivan should amend existing zoning laws to include provisions for an on-site wastewater system model ordinance. Overlay zoning and the site plan review process should be used to evaluate development in non-sewered areas and to regulate on-site systems. Additional information is available from the New York On-site Wastewater Treatment Training Network and information on model laws (including overlay districts and zoning) are summarized in Appendix G.

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

- John Becker, Town Supervisor (current)
- John Gladney, Town Supervisor (previous)
- Phil Costanzo, Town Code Officer
- Don Collela, Town Attorney
- Geoff Snyder, Madison County Department of Environmental Health
- Jack Miller, Madison County Planning Department

Local Laws Reviewed

- Town of Sullivan Zoning Law (including Town site plan review)
- Town Subdivision Regulations
- Town of Sullivan Waterfront Consistency Law
- Draft Town of Sullivan Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan
- Route 31 Development Plan
- Comprehensive Master Plan, Town of Sullivan