

Chapter IX: Conclusions

Where Do We Go From Here?

The Oneida Lake State of the Lake and Watershed Report was compiled as a reference for local decision-makers, to be used in the identification and prioritization of goals and in the development of action plans for the protection of surface and groundwater resources. Collection of information for this publication has helped to establish new coalitions that cross political boundaries, thereby opening up lines of communication and fostering regional cooperation.

CNY RPDB goals for the coming year are ambitious. The preparation of a watershed management plan, continued municipal outreach, educational workshops and conferences, and watershed improvement projects are anticipated. The multi-county tributary monitoring program will continue through a regional partnership between the CNY RPDB, several county organizations, and two academic institutions. Long-term program goals are designed to improve our knowledge of water chemistry and stream characteristics. The Oneida Lake Watershed Agricultural Program, originally established in 2002, will continue to address non-point sources of pollution through the New York State Agricultural Environmental Management Program.

The development of a watershed management plan is a critical step in long-term protection of our local water resources. The plan will provide a unique opportunity for all interested parties to identify and prioritize the key water resource issues of concern and to discuss specific plans for the protection and improvement of our local lakes and streams. High quality water and the protection of critical areas such as wetlands, fish spawning areas and wildlife habitat will help to maintain land values, boost recreational opportunities, and strengthen the local economy. The true success of this project will therefore be based on continued regional partnerships and local-level participation. The Task Force Committees and the Watershed Advisory Council are providing opportunities to strengthen alliances with influential watershed decision-makers to achieve these program goals.

As the management planning process continues, the Oneida Lake watershed community is following in the footsteps carved by many other New York State lake communities over the past twenty years. Municipal, county, and stakeholder representatives serving on the Watershed Advisory Council Board of Directors will take a leading role in the planning process, thereby ensuring that the project remains a locally-driven initiative. Numerous challenges are anticipated in the months to come, as the watershed covers portions of six counties and sixty-nine municipalities.

Not only does planning for the future make sense, but in most lake communities, enhanced partnerships, local-level participation, and a well-orchestrated strategy for watershed management also provides greatly improved opportunities for state and federal funding. With a bit of work, program efficiency will also be strengthened and communication among watershed stakeholders will be nurtured as we work together for a common goal. We'll take one step at a time – committed to cooperation, communication, and teamwork – as we forge ahead with the management plan.