

# Project News

Fall 2001

## What is the Oneida Lake Watershed Initiative and What's in it For Me?

### What is a watershed?

A watershed is the total land area that drains into a stream, river, or lake. The Oneida Lake watershed covers 800,000 acres (or 1,382 square miles), and extends all the way from the Tug Hill region in Lewis County, down to the northern border of Cortland County. All the surface and ground water from this entire region drains into Oneida Lake. Decisions regarding land use within our five-county watershed have a direct influence on the water quality in Oneida Lake.

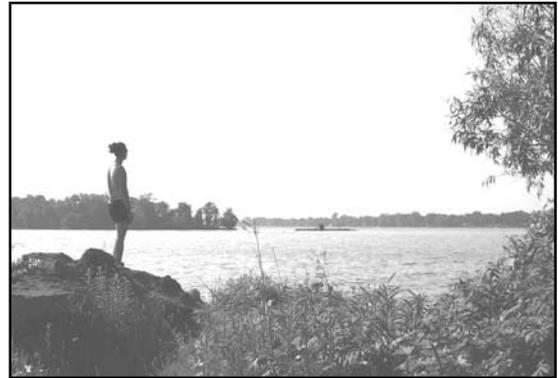
### What is a Lake and Watershed Management Plan?

It is an opportunity for watershed decision-makers to identify and prioritize important issues of concern and to select restoration and maintenance goals for the long-term protection of our local water resources. As part of this process, watershed stakeholders are working together to document the natural and cultural features in Oneida Lake and its watershed and will prioritize the key issues and objectives to protect our water resources for future generations. The watershed management plan is an action-oriented, local-level initiative and all lake users are encouraged to participate.

### Will the Lake and Watershed Management Plan benefit local municipalities?

Definitely! Comprehensive, long-term planning for a healthy lake environment will attract business, tourism, and recreation dollars to strengthen the local economy. In addition to the availability of state and federal funding to support this planning initiative, \$145,000 is currently available for watershed improvement projects. Municipalities in other NYS lake communities have identified the following additional benefits of their Watershed Management Plans:

- Improved opportunities to receive state and federal grant funding
- Cooperation among organizations, pooled



Oneida Lake

services and financial resources, and enhanced communication beyond municipal borders – all leading to improved regional efficiency

- Ability to prioritize projects and to develop ecologically based, cost effective solutions within the watershed as a regional effort
- Uniformity, consistency and fairness in program implementation
- Reduction of nonpoint source pollution and protection of fisheries, wildlife habitats, and other critical areas
- Defining water resources goals as a grassroots, locally-based effort, without the creation of additional bureaucracy
- Informed, involved community leaders and lake users that are in a better position to make wise management decisions regarding the lake and watershed

### What are the project goals?

A Watershed Advisory Council is being formed to ensure local level involvement in all aspects of the management planning process. The Council will take a leading role in determining the future direction of water resource protection. A comprehensive report called the "State of the Lake and Watershed" is being written as a reference for municipalities and stakeholders. The report will contain information

(see *Watershed Plan* on page 2)

# Watershed Plan

*(continued from front)*

about biological and water quality characteristics of the lake and streams, fisheries data, cultural and historic resources, population trends, economic statistics, and a summary of recreation impacts to the region. Educational initiatives are being implemented to ensure that the public stays well informed and involved. Working partnerships among all agencies and organizations have been established for increased regional efficiency. Multi-county GIS mapping initiatives and water quality monitoring programs will provide a summary of regional mapping resources and scientific documentation of land use impacts to Oneida Lake.

## Have any other lake communities done a Lake and Watershed Management Plan?

We are not alone. Many lake communities across the nation have completed management plans. In New York State, Oneida is following in the footsteps of lakes such as Seneca, Keuka, Skaneateles, Cayuga, Conesus, Canandaigua, Owasco, and Champlain.

## How much will the Management Plan cost me?

There are no costs for municipal participation in the planning and development phase of the Management Plan. Grants are available from the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (from the Environmental Protection Fund) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (thanks to the efforts of Congressmen Walsh and Boehlert). This funding, along with in-kind contributions from local agencies and organizations, will support the project for the next 2½ years.

## Who is coordinating this effort?

State and federal funds have been awarded to the Central New York Regional Planning and Development Board. The Herkimer-Oneida Counties Comprehensive Planning Program, Cornell University, SUNY Brockport, Cornell Cooperative Extension, County Water Quality Coordinating Committees, and many other agencies, organizations, and municipalities are also participating in this project.

# Oneida Lake Watershed Advisory Council Takes a Leading Role

The Watershed Advisory Council is a group of municipal governments and watershed stakeholders that will oversee the development and implementation of the Oneida Lake and Watershed Management Program. Council members will be asked to assist in the development of a watershed management plan, provide local water resource information (when available) for the State of the Lake and Watershed Report, assist in the distribution of User Perception Surveys, identify and prioritize local issues of concern, and participate in the evaluation and selection of restoration and protection projects in the Oneida Lake basin.

The principal decision-making body of the Watershed Advisory Council is a Board of Directors made up of the following representatives:

- Five County-level representatives will serve on the Board. One representative shall be appointed from each county within the watershed: Onondaga, Madison, Oneida, Oswego, and Lewis.
- Six local government representatives will serve on the Board – one from each of the following six geographic areas within the watershed: Fish Creek area, Eastern Watershed area, North Shore area, South Shore area, South-

ern Uplands area, and Butternut & Limestone Creeks area.

- Eight stakeholders will serve on the Board. Individuals will be selected who are members of a broad or regional organization that may represent the following interests: water resources, recreation, fish and wildlife, economic development, agriculture, forestry, and tourism.

Recommendations of people to serve on the Board are currently being discussed by County and local governments and the Task Force Executive Committee. The Executive Committee has developed draft By-Laws but it is anticipated that the Council will eventually modify them according to recommendations made by the Board.

The Council is designed to take a leading role in defining local water resource goals and priorities. All municipalities and stakeholders interested in defining a long-term strategy for protection of the region's water resources are encouraged to participate to ensure that this process remains a grassroots initiative. For more information, contact the CNY RPDB at (315) 422-8276 or the Herkimer Oneida Counties Comprehensive Planning Program at (315) 798-5710.

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## Kudos to the Land Use Committee

Many thanks to the people who are contributing time and talent on the Task Force Land Use Committee, Chaired by Ron Kaplewicz of the Soil & Water Conservation Committee. Land Use Committee members have taken a leading role in recommending priority information to be included in the State of the Lake and Watershed (SOLW) report. This publication, being compiled as a reference for municipalities and stakeholders, will serve as a comprehensive summary of biological and water quality characteristics of the Lake and

streams, fisheries data, cultural and historic resources, population trends, economic statistics, and recreation impacts to the watershed. Many authors throughout the region are contributing to the SOLW report.

Our thanks also go to the Land Use Committee and Executive Committee members, who took a leading role in determining the guidelines for CNY RPDB's implementation funds. For additional information about the Land Use Committee, contact Ron Kaplewicz at (315) 342-2810.

# Four-County Cooperation - An Essential Ingredient in the Tributary Monitoring Program

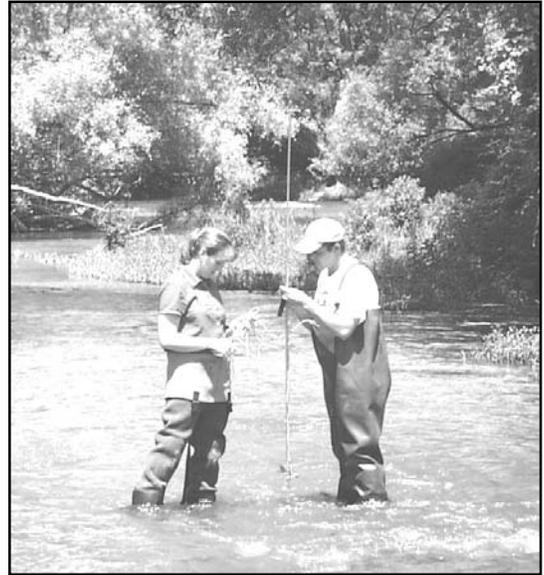
In June 2001, representatives from the Central New York Regional Planning & Development Board (CNY RPDB), the Cornell Biological Field Station, SUNY Brockport, Onondaga Community College, Life Science Laboratories, and four County agencies (Onondaga County Health Department, Madison County Planning Department, Oneida County SWCD, and Oswego County SWCD) met to practice sampling procedures for the 2001-2002 monitoring program.

The goal of the program is to sample all primary Oneida Lake tributaries to document pollution loading to the lake and to prioritize the streams according to problem severity. This process will help to identify watershed

areas for future restoration and protection initiatives.

Many thanks to the County organizations that will provide equipment and staff time for the sampling sessions. The CNY RPDB will pay for the laboratory analyses, provide funding for a Data Manager and technical reports, and supply equipment for County use. The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation is providing grant funding from the NYS Environmental Protection Fund to support this program.

The monitoring, anticipated to start this winter, is a component of the Oneida Lake and Watershed Management Plan.



*Reviewing sampling procedures along Chittenango Creek*

## Regional Partners Strengthen the Watershed Plan

The CNY RPDB has established a partnership with the Herkimer-Oneida Counties Comprehensive Planning Program (HOCCPP) for a variety of Watershed Management Program tasks. HOCCPP will coordinate GIS mapping resources throughout the watershed and will provide data collection, writing, and editing assistance for the SOLW report and the Watershed Management Plan. HOCCPP will also partner with CNY RPDB in municipal and stakeholder recruitment on the Watershed Advisory Council, will help in the distribution and interpretation of User Surveys, and will participate in public education and outreach initiatives such as the annual Task Force Conference.

The CNY RPDB is also in the process of establishing guidelines for additional contracts with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Onondaga County, the Cornell Biological Field Station, Dr. Joseph Makarewicz, and Life Science Laboratories. These partnerships, along with valuable assistance provided by the Task Force Committees, are designed to strengthen the Watershed Management Plan and to enhance the local level participation.

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## Funding is Available for Watershed Implementation Projects

The CNY RPDB is currently working with County Water Quality Coordinating Committees (WQCCs) and the Task Force Executive Committee in reviewing implementation projects designed to restore and protect water resources in the Oneida Lake watershed.

August 31<sup>st</sup> was the deadline for proposals to be submitted to WQCCs in Onondaga, Madison, Oneida, Oswego, and Lewis Counties. Each WQCC will select the high priority projects from within their County, and

will pass its recommendations on to the Task Force Executive Committee by mid-September. The Task Force Executive Committee will review the proposals from each of the five counties and will recommend one or more projects for implementation. These recommendations will then be presented to the CNY RPDB for a final decision. Priority will be given to proposals that have wide-reaching impacts, that involve cooperation among several groups, and that have the potential to leverage future funding under other grant programs.

A total of \$145,000 is available for agricultural and non-agricultural projects to improve water resources in the Oneida Lake watershed. The NYS DEC is providing dollars from the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) for this program.



## *Executive Committee*

### **Jessica Breiten**

*Herkimer-Oneida Counties  
Comprehensive Planning Program*

### **Steven P. Eidt P.E.**

*NYS DEC -- Region 7*

### **Ron Kaplewicz**

*New York State Soil & Water  
Conservation Committee*

### **Dr. Edward Mills**

*Cornell Biological Field Station*

### **Anne B. Saltman**

*CNY Regional Planning and  
Development Board*

### **Kurt Snyder**

*Oneida Lake Association*

### **Les Wedge**

*NYS DEC-Region 7*

## ***Impacts of Urbanization on Water Resources & Flooding***

Thursday, September 20, 2001, 9:00 a.m. - noon, DeWitt Town Hall

The focus of this workshop will be on the Butternut and Limestone Creek watersheds. Come and learn more about the following topics: The Impacts of Urbanization: A Historical Perspective of the Region; Stormwater Management Options for Municipalities; and Municipal and Stakeholder Participation in the Oneida Lake and Watershed Management Plan.

This workshop is free & open to the public. Municipal elected officials are encouraged to attend. Pre-registration is required. To register, call Sheila Myers at Cornell Cooperative Extension of Onondaga County at (315) 424-9485. The workshop is sponsored by Cornell Cooperative Extension of Onondaga County with assistance from the CNY RPDB's Oneida Lake Task Force Education & Outreach Committee, the Town of DeWitt Advisory Conservation Commission and the Town of Manlius Environmental Council.

## ***Oneida Lake Task Force Conference***

**"Local-Level Decision-Making in the Oneida Lake Watershed"**

Wednesday, November 14, 2001, 8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Lake Shore Yacht and Country Club, Lake Shore Road, Cicero, NY

Municipal and stakeholder representatives are strongly encouraged to attend this important conference and to take a leading role in defining the future direction of the Watershed Advisory Council. This popular, annual event is scheduled to facilitate open lines of communication in the identification and prioritization of local water resource issues, to assist in the selection of municipal representatives for the Watershed Advisory Council's Board of Directors, and to strengthen partnerships among water resource professionals, local governments, and stakeholder representatives throughout the Oneida Lake watershed.



**CNY Regional Planning  
and Development Board**

**126 North Salina Street**

**100 Clinton Square, Suite 200**

**Syracuse, New York 13202**