

Oneida Lake and Watershed Management Plan



An action-oriented, local-level initiative

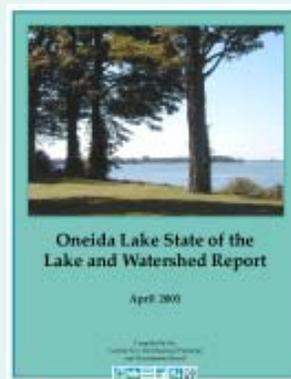
The Oneida Lake and Watershed Management Plan is a process whereby stakeholders work together to develop opportunities for the long-term protection and improvement of surface and ground water resources. This is an action-oriented, local level initiative that involves data collection and analysis, identification of priority issues, and the selection of recommendations to improve problem areas. The Management Plan is providing many environmental and community benefits:

- Cooperation among organizations, pooled services and financial resources, and enhanced communication that reduces project costs and improves regional efficiency;
- Reduction of non-point source pollution and improved fisheries and aquatic habitats;
- Improved business, tourism, and recreation opportunities to strengthen the local economy;
- Development of ecologically-based, cost-effective solutions as a grassroots effort;
- Uniformity, consistency and fairness in program implementation; and
- Informed lake users and decision-makers through widespread education programs.



Local leadership through the Advisory Council

The Oneida Lake Watershed Advisory Council is a group of municipal governments and stakeholders that provides leadership in the development and implementation of the Oneida Lake and Watershed Management Plan. The decision-making body is a Board of Directors that is balanced with respect to interests, experience, background, and geographic representation.



Lake and watershed interactions

A watershed is the total land area that drains into a stream, river, or lake. The Oneida Lake watershed, containing portions of 69 municipalities, covers 872,722 acres and extends from the Tug Hill region in Lewis County, down to the northern border of Cortland County. Land use within this six-county watershed has a direct influence on the water quality and aquatic biota in the lake and its tributaries.



The Oneida Lake Watershed Management Plan is a regional initiative coordinated by the Central New York Regional Planning and Development Board (CNY RPDB). It is jointly funded by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, using dollars from the Environmental Protection Fund, and by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency with funds secured by Congressmen James T. Walsh and Sherwood Boehlert.



Benefits to the Oneida Lake Watershed Community

Information on natural resources and economic influences

The Oneida Lake State of the Lake and Watershed Report contains a comprehensive summary of information about the lake and its watershed and is used when management decisions are made about local water resources.

Goals and action plans

A “Management Strategy for Oneida Lake and Its Watershed” is being written with assistance from the Working Groups, the Watershed Advisory Council Board of Directors, and the CNY Regional Planning and Development Board (CNY RPDB). This report will present a plan of action for priority areas of concern, pollution reduction goals, participating agencies, and plans for education and public outreach.

Water quality monitoring in local streams

Water quality monitoring on all major streams flowing into Oneida Lake has been a successful four-county partnership designed to document the level and source of nutrient and sediment loading to the lake.

Education programs keep the public well-informed

Education initiatives include conferences, workshops, watershed tours, newsletters, a website, public presentations, tabletop displays, watershed fact sheets, and a homeowners guide. A collection of GIS maps is also available for educational purposes.

Control of exotic species & cormorants

Water chestnut, zebra mussels, and cormorants pose significant threats to fisheries and recreational opportunities on Oneida Lake. Collaboration continues between the CNY Water Chestnut Task Force, Cornell University, the Oneida Lake Association, CNY RPDB, and other groups that are working on effective control strategies.

Watershed improvement projects

Several exciting projects have been initiated under the management plan program including a Hamilton College project to conduct research on sediment loading and transport in Oneida Creek; a City of Oneida project to develop alternatives and associated cost estimates for addressing the problem of septic waste runoff to Oneida Creek; and a Madison County Planning Department shoreline vegetation project.

Agricultural programs support local farmers while protecting water resources

An Agricultural Watershed Resource Specialist coordinates agricultural activities in the Oneida Lake watershed. Work continues on Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) Tier II activities with funding opportunities for farm planning and conservation Best Management Practices. Educational opportunities are provided to the farming community, and Agricultural Advisory Committee members provide insight on the Watershed Management Plan.

Watershed mapping and municipal assistance

GIS maps are generated for Oneida Lake watershed municipalities to assist with land use planning needs, and assistance is provided with the review of local laws.

For additional information

Check the Oneida Lake website at www.cnyrpdb.org/oneidalake or call the Central New York Regional Planning and Development Board at (315) 422-8276.

