



Project News

Fall 2002

Draft Oneida Lake State of the Lake and Watershed Report Available for Public Review

The draft Oneida Lake State of the Lake and Watershed Report is now available for public review and comment. The report contains detailed information on the environmental, regulatory, economic, and cultural setting for the six-county Oneida Lake watershed that encompasses over 800,000 acres ranging from the Tug Hill region in Lewis County, down to the northern border of Cortland County. The report also includes a summary of key issues of concern for the water resources in the region. After the public comment period, a final report will be generated for use when a management plan is developed for the region's water resources.

The report is available on the CNY RPDB web site (<http://cnypdb.org/oneidalake>), and at select libraries, Oneida Lake shoreline town and village municipal offices, planning departments, health departments, Cooperative Extension offices, and other organizations throughout the watershed. The public comment period is scheduled from now until December 13, 2002. Information meetings, providing an additional opportunity for the public to comment on the report, are scheduled on the following dates:

November 14th – Village of Sylvan Beach Municipal Hall, 7:00-8:30 PM; Contact: Jessica Breiten, Herkimer Oneida Counties Comprehensive Planning Program (315) 798-5710

November 20th – Town of Constantia Town Hall, 7:00 – 8:30 PM; Contact: Amy Samuels, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Onondaga County (315) 424-9485 ext. 233

November 21st – Town of DeWitt Town Hall, 7:00 – 8:30 PM; Contact: Sheila Myers, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Onondaga County (315) 424-9485, ext. 230.



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Oneida Lake State of the Lake and Watershed Report

November 2002

Central New York Regional Planning and Development Board



The Watershed Advisory Council Takes Shape

A Watershed Advisory Council has been formed with a Board of Directors made up of county, municipal, and stakeholder representatives throughout the Oneida Lake watershed. The Council is taking a leading role in the development and implementation of the lake and watershed management plan and will ensure that these efforts move forward as a local-level initiative. The Board of Directors includes members from the following areas:

Five County-Level Representatives - One representative serves from each of the five primary Counties within the watershed.

Thirteen Local Government Representatives - Members currently represent nine Oneida Lake waterfront communities. Representatives also serve from the following regions: Northern Uplands area, Eastern Watershed area, the Southern Uplands area, and the Butternut / Limestone Creeks area.

Eight Stakeholder Representatives - Members represent the following interests: water resources, recreation, fish and wildlife, economic development, Native Americans, agriculture, forestry, and tourism.

Annual Task Force Conference and Bus Tour - A Success!

Many thanks to everyone that contributed to the success of the 4th Annual Oneida Lake Watershed Task Force Conference at the Arrowhead Lodge on October 9, 2002.

The morning session featured presentations on topics including the biological status of Oneida Lake, flood control and lake level management, watershed management, and agricultural influences throughout the six-county watershed. After lunch, conference participants boarded a tour bus and visited sites throughout the watershed. The tour was designed to emphasize the land use and watershed management decisions that influence surface and groundwater quality throughout the region.



Jessica Breiten (Herkimer Oneida Counties Comprehensive Planning Program) and Howard Goebel (New York State Canal Corporation)

Regional Planning Board Provides Funding for Watershed Improvement Projects

A \$23,970 grant was awarded to Hamilton College for a sediment research project at the base of Oneida Creek. Grant funding is made possible through the Central New York Regional Planning and Development Board's (CNY RPDB) Watershed Protection Program, using New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC) Environmental Protection Fund dollars. The Task Force Executive Committee has taken a leading role in the proposal review and selection process.

One of the main issues of concern for the Oneida Lake watershed is sedimentation from tributary streams. Water quality data has shown that Oneida Creek is one of the largest contributors of sediment to the lake. Sedimentation on Oneida Creek is the focus of this project, aimed at gaining a detailed picture of the processes leading to the infilling of South Bay. Historic bathymetric maps of the area show that the general depth around the shoreline and creek mouth was around 3-4 feet. A recent bathymetric survey of the area shows that much of the area is 3 feet deep or less, with some areas only 1 to 1.5 feet deep.

This project is focused on understanding the factors contributing to the sediment delta at the mouth of Oneida Creek. Although erosion is a natural process, human influences may have increased the erosion rates in the Creek. Lake level alterations may also be changing the wave dynamics so that more material is deposited in the area during lake drawdown. An echosounder will be used to determine the depth of the entire area. In addition, sediment particles will be sampled and analyzed for their size and composition. This will allow us to determine the origin and makeup of the sediments in the delta. Ground penetrating radar will be used to examine the layering of sediments below the sediment-water interface to determine how the sediments are being deposited and moved within the area. If conditions are appropriate, the sediment will also be analyzed using the Lead 210 method to determine the time scale of sediment deposition. The final phases of the project will tie together this information with past monitoring and research in Oneida Creek and South Bay. In addition, a list of possible solutions for ameliorating the problem areas will be compiled.

This project involves the resources and expertise of the Geology Department at Hamilton College. The Madison County Planning Department will be working closely with Hamilton College, with additional support from the Oneida County Soil and Water Conservation District.

Opportunities to Protect Wells and Drinking Water Supplies

Throughout the Oneida Lake watershed, there are many farms and homes that rely on private well water supplies. Individuals who use private water supplies, such as wells or springs, are solely responsible for ensuring the quality of their water and should have their water tested yearly by a state-certified laboratory. Water should be tested for bacteria, which can run between \$15 and \$20 per test. Cornell Cooperative Extension can help homeowners determine if they have a water contamination problem and can provide guidance on the most cost-effective way to treat it. For more information on purchasing water treatment devices and protecting your water supply contact your local Cornell Cooperative Extension Office or view the Cornell web site: <http://www.cce.cornell.edu/factsheets/wq-fact-sheets/index.htm>. Cornell Cooperative Extension of Onondaga County currently provides assistance for homeowners on private wells by offering well water workshops and access to free or reduced fees for water testing. If a municipality or group in the Oneida Lake watershed is interested in pursuing this type of program, please contact Sheila Myers at (315) 424-9485 ext. 230.

Stream Monitoring Provides Important Water Quality Information

Representatives from four county agencies (Onondaga County Health Department, Madison County Planning Department, Oneida County Soil and Water Conservation District, and Oswego County Soil and Water Conservation District) have been active participants in a water quality monitoring program on the major streams that flow into Oneida Lake. The program is designed to provide scientific documentation on the amount of sediment and pollution loading to the Lake.

This phase of the monitoring program will continue until the spring of 2003 with guidance provided by the Oneida Lake Task Force Technical Committee and program coordination provided by the Central New York Regional Planning and Development Board. Dr. Joseph Makarewicz from SUNY Brockport is serving as data manager and will compile the technical summaries. Based on long-term laboratory results, the streams will eventually be prioritized according to problem severity.

During the next phase of the monitoring program, additional on-site and laboratory analyses will be conducted at several locations on one or two of the high priority streams. This will allow watershed decision-makers to identify specific areas for future restoration programs.



Onondaga Community College student, John O'Dwyer, provides monitoring assistance along Limestone Creek in Onondaga County.

A Regional Focus on Agriculture in the Oneida Lake Watershed

Residents, public officials, and visitors throughout the Oneida Lake watershed know that a healthy lake environment maintains land values, attracts business, boosts recreation and strengthens the local economy. Given the large size of the watershed, regional collaboration across political and municipal boundaries is vital to the success of water quality initiatives.



A good example of a successful, watershed-wide partnership is the Watershed Agricultural Project that involves the cooperation of five County Soil and Water Conservation Districts. The major goal is the

identification, analysis and reduction of agricultural non-point sources of pollution throughout the watershed. In support of this goal, Jo-Anne Faulkner was hired as the Oneida Lake Agricultural Watershed Resource Specialist. She is currently working on agriculture programs in the region for a two-year term with funding provided by the Central New York Regional Planning and Development Board. During this time, agricultural data throughout the watershed is being collected using the Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) Program. Jo-Anne formed an Agricultural Advisory Committee, established an education and outreach program, is working with District man-

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Addressing Water Chestnut in CNY

Water chestnut was first detected in the western end of Oneida Lake in 1999. This invasive, exotic plant poses a significant threat because it forms dense mats that interfere with boating, fishing, and other recreational uses of the lake. Progress has been made to coordinate control measures and to research future funding opportunities. Volunteers participated in two water chestnut hand-pulling workshops that were organized by Cornell Cooperative Extension of Onondaga County with funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. The Oswego County Soil and Water Conservation District and the Madison County Planning Department also coordinated mechanical harvesting and the placement of educational signs around the lake. In addition, these agencies and other concerned government and private organizations formed the CNY Water Chestnut Task Force, a group that is working on plans to control and eradicate water chestnut from Central New York surface waters. A report generated by the CNY RPDB summarizes the extent of the water chestnut problem,

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Agriculture

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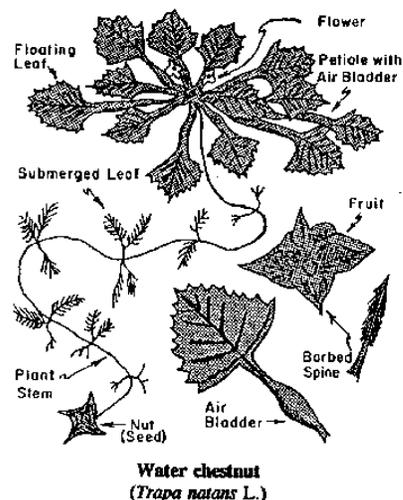
agers to prioritize water quality impacts from farms, and coordinated the collection of data for the State of the Lake and Watershed Report. The Agricultural Advisory Committee is made up of farmers representing each of the five primary counties in the watershed.

If you have questions about the Oneida Lake Watershed Agricultural Program, AEM, or the role of the Agricultural Specialist, please contact Jo-Anne Faulkner, Oneida County SWCD (315) 736-3334.

Water Chestnut

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areas of concern, and education, outreach and control measures throughout the Central New York region. CNY RPDB, in cooperation with the CNY Water Chestnut Task Force, is also researching federal funding opportunities and potential chemical control options to address the water chestnut problem. Additional information is available by contacting the CNY RPDB at (315) 422-8276.



Learn more about the Oneida Lake and Watershed Management Plan – Visit the project web site:
www.cnyrpdb.org/oneidalake



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