

Network News



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Twin Parks Offer Two Styles of Lake Access

by Sharon Anderson, Watershed Steward

Part 2 in our series about the Cayuga Lake Scenic Byway features the twin sites of Myers Park and Salt Point in the Town of Lansing. While less well known than Taughannock Falls State, the initial installment of this series, these parks deserve a visit.

Nestled side by side on the east shore of Cayuga Lake are two very different parks. Myers Park, a 31-acre expanse of trees, lawn and lake frontage, is free to Town of Lansing residents and open to others for a nominal fee. Lifeguards supervise swimmers throughout the summer, vending machines offer treats and the seven pavilions can be rented or used opportunistically. Visitors recreate at the two playgrounds, horseshoe pits, basketball court and volleyball net. Marinas and launches service the boating crowd. Canoers and kayakers often prefer the put in at the mouth of Salmon Creek, an undeveloped launch site at the north edge of Myers Park.

Salmon Creek separates Myers Park from Salt Point, a state-owned natural area that is freely open to all. Birders flock to this spit of land to view an estimated 150 species of birds that inhabit the area at least part of the year. The Town of Lansing recently accepted oversight of Salt Point and has begun changes that encourage quiet activities such as canoeing and kayaking, walking, cross country skiing, fishing, photography and nature study. The gate and improved perimeter road replaces a spider web of dirt tracks. The town's efforts are aimed at counteracting nearly 50 years of unregulated, and sometimes unruly, behavior that left behind trash the Watershed Network removed during an annual shoreline cleanup.

continued on page 5



Myers Park offers tranquility as well as amenities. Wander out to the diminutive lighthouse for a peaceful spot to gaze out at the lake.

**Join Us for Music,
Food, & Fun!**
Celebrate Cayuga Lake

11th Annual Lakefest

August 23, Goose Watch Winery, Romulus NY

*See back cover
for more details*

WATERSHED STEWARD'S MESSAGE

Beginnings are Also Endings

The excitement of moving the office to Aurora in early August means leaving behind Interlaken, the source of many fond memories. The postmasters showed endless patience with my questions and blunders. The village officials offered information, provided meeting space and always had a ready smile. The lovely garden, charming library, yummy baked goods, pleasant shop owners and the local characters that stopped by to chat will be missed even though I will discover similar charms in Aurora. More irreplaceable has been my novel commute.

I owe much to Sheldrake Point Vineyard and vineyard manager, Dave Weimann, for making a long commute from the east to west side of the lake joyful rather than a chore. From April when lake levels rose until they fell in November I joined Weimann on his boat to ride across Cayuga Lake. Getting my bike out of a vineyard barn, I finished my multi-modal commute by pedaling uphill to the office. The trip was no quicker than our winter ride-share around the southern tip of the lake, but exchanging traffic for such a peaceful and invigorating start to my workday was priceless.

Farewell and warm thanks to all who made the stay in Interlaken a sweet success. 🐦

Sharon Anderson



Cruise Cayuga on the Floating Classroom

By Bill Foster, Chair, Cayuga Lake Floating Classroom Project

The Floating Classroom was launched in 2002 to inspire stronger connections between our communities and the water resources that define them by providing hands-on educational experiences on Cayuga Lake. Now, more than 1200 students join us each year for programs that blend of direct experience, sound science, local history and personal values. We cruise Cayuga Lake aboard Tiohero Tours' M/V Haendel, a 45-foot tour vessel that is well-equipped for water monitoring and many ecological studies.

Over the course of this and future summers, we hope to offer frequent public cruises, featuring guest speakers and presentations, and encouraging everyone to participate in our "Cayuga WaterLab" monitoring events. As we collect water quality samples, and catch a glimpse of the tiny plant and animal communities that

keep our lake healthy, there is ample opportunity to consider the present and future of Cayuga Lake, and the impact we might have upon it. There is no better time than that on the Floating Classroom to share ideas on topics

ranging from local recreational use, wastewater treatment, or global climate change.

Important decisions will be made in the coming years with regard to our water resources, and our goal is to equip watershed residents with the understanding they need to build a sustainable future. We hope you'll join us! Our cruise schedule and locations will depend on the weather this spring and summer. Check your local media and the Watershed Network website for announcements, or contact Bill Foster, (607)-272-7256 or parsifal@twcny.rr.com for more information. 🐦



Bill Foster (center) and other Floating Classroom instructors offer a chance to be out on the lake and learn about it first-hand. The plankton net he is using lets students look closely at algae, which forms the base of the aquatic food chain.

Cayuga Lake Watershed Network

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From Sight Seeing to Wine Drinking: A Glance at Historic Tourist Attractions around Cayuga Lake

By W. Rachel Singley, Wells College student and Watershed Network Intern

Many watershed residents know that Cayuga Lake attracts tourists who come to bask in the natural beauty of our watershed, but few know that this area was the premier location for vacationers, tourists and adventurers from America and Europe in the 19th century.

In the 1800's large numbers of tourists traveled here to marvel at the immense natural beauty of the Finger Lakes. Among the amenities available to tourists (besides fair weather in the summer and wonderful natural landscapes) were swimming, tours, and ferry boat rides. Ferries were a large industry because they had dual purpose: during the off seasons they transported goods around the lake, and during the tourism season deck chairs were brought onboard for passengers. Hundreds of tourists each year came from almost every corner of the Earth, having been drawn here by the writings of numerous British travelers who visited the Finger Lakes. Tourists marveled at the pristine forests and meadows surrounding waterfalls and lakes that together made this area ideal for anyone seeking relaxation and adventure.

A British author and lieutenant, Edward Thomas Cole, toured the Finger Lakes in the summer and autumn of 1832. He made extensive entries in his journal that he later collected into a book that incited further tourism to the region. The book verbally illustrated the beauty to be seen and the almost magical quality of the gorges. It all but advertised the enjoyment to be had in the region.

In his book *Coke* describes the sights of our watershed in grave detail; on his way down the lake the steamboat on which he rode stopped to gather more passengers at "a village connected with [the village of] Cayuga by a bridge exceeding a mile in length, over which the western road passes." The village where they stopped was Geneva which was connected to the village of Cayuga by the historic mile long toll-bridge that was originally built in 1800 by the Manhattan Company and New York State, and re-built in 1812 after ice damage.

As he sailed down from the northern end of the lake, Coke recounted the variations in nature he saw on the banks on either side of him: "... the banks becoming high and craggy in some places and in others cultivated to the water's edge... For the last few miles, the face of the country presented a singular appearance, being broken every hundred yards, or thereabout, with narrow and deep ravines, formed by the heavy rush of water from the hills in the spring of the year. In some the rock was rugged and bare; in others the



William Hecht online collection

A postcard photo of sightseers in the late 1800's enjoying a tour of Cayuga Lake by ferry Boat, which was a popular tourist activity at the time.

grass had sprung up again... there were long and heavy undulations, like the swelling of the sea."

By 1835 several hotels sprang up in response to the influx of tourists. These hotels included the Sheldrake house on Sheldrake point, the Cayuga Lake House in Ithaca (which had a golf course and carriages that shuttled guests to and from the Ithaca railway), the Aurora Inn in Aurora, NY and the Coleman House at what used to be Kidder's point, located directly opposite what is now King Ferry.

But the pristine natural beauty that drew tourists did not last long; by the early 1900's the industrial use of the lake began to detract from the beauty that tourists had been coming to see. Mills sprung up on the banks of every stream; lush forests were clear cut to make room for villages; Cayuga Lake became more of a transport highway than a sight-seeing adventure. The result of this economic development was that by the mid 1900's tourism in this area began to dwindle. This slow decline of tourism also meant a slow decline of income for some lake-side villages that thrived on the tourism: During the 1800's East Varick was a thriving town with a large grain mill, steam boat dock, and a hotel, all of which benefited from the seasonal influx of tourists. During the decline, locals who sold goods and services to tourists lost a large part of their livelihood. The town began to lose its economic strength, and is now a quiet cluster of houses on the lake's edge.

But in the mid 1980's this area began to reclaim its former prestige at the top of any informed traveler's list with the development of the wine-making community on the shores of the lakes. The creation of the Cayuga Lake Wine Trail played a large role in revitalizing Cayuga Lake's tourism market by offering tourists amenities unique to this area: a picturesque lake surrounded by rolling hills, gorges and wineries that not only offer a wide variety of styles – from rustic charm to elegant dining – but are also internationally renowned for their quality as simply great wines. 🍷

Resource *Upstate Travels: British views of Nineteenth – Century New York* R. Haydon Syracuse University Press 1982

Tompkins County Water Resources Council and Cornell University Take a Strategic Approach to Cayuga Lake Stewardship

By Roxanna Johnston, Community Partnership Chair

Among all the parks, schools, state forests and public places in Tompkins County, Cayuga Lake stands out as the preeminent community resource. The lake provides essential drinking water for tens of thousands of area residents and is a source of recreation and beauty. Cayuga's waters are here for all of us to enjoy – and it is our common responsibility to be good lake stewards.

This common responsibility is the driving force behind the creation of an important, first-time partnership, developed in 2006, between members of the Tompkins County Water Resources Council (WRC) and Cornell University staff and faculty to develop a plan for tracking water quality in the southern end of Cayuga Lake. The Partnership was formed, in part, to explore the possibility of redirecting Lake Source Cooling facility monitoring resources to a community based program to better address the issues in the lake. The Partnership's work eventually included mapping several regular monitoring efforts in the southern basin. After four public meetings, dialogue with other researchers and countless Partnership meetings, a new comprehensive monitoring plan for the lake's southern end has taken shape.

One of the major findings from the Partnership's work was that existing monitoring efforts already include nearly 60 sampling locations in or near the southern basin of the lake. In fact, several independent researchers are monitoring essentially the same points. The Partnership decided the best initial approach was to work collaboratively with other researchers to maintain water quality data at all the existing sampling locations and re-direct the resources devoted to overlapping efforts towards new objectives including mapping of circulation patterns and tracking of wind and storm impacts. In this way, the Monitoring Plan uses existing resources to increase our understanding of the southern end of Cayuga Lake.

The Monitoring Plan also proposes to create a greater understanding of lake water circulation patterns, initiate monitoring baselines for toxics and emergent contaminants,

and provide data for problem solving for algae and weed abundance. Also, the plan recommends a series of special studies to develop a better understanding of the ecology of the lake by monitoring the food web, including macrophytes, *Mysis relicta*, *Dreissenidae* (zebra and quagga mussels),

Diporeia (shrimp-like organisms), phytoplankton, sediment and fish.

The Partnership is seeking public input to the plan. Presentations have been held for the Tompkins County Environmental Management Council and the public. The plan is available on the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network's webpage for viewing. Future presentations will be

advertised or can be scheduled for your group by contacting Joan Jurkowich, jjurkowich@tompkins-co.org or by calling her at 607-274-5560. Written comments can also be submitted to Joan, care of the Tompkins County Planning Department, 121 E. Court St., Ithaca, NY 14850.

This new, strategic approach toward the lake ecosystem could become an important source of information for individual research interests and should also assist in securing funding for monitoring efforts. This initiative will help meet community needs for resource management, as defined by this plan and the more comprehensive Guidance Document, under development by the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network and the Intermunicipal Organization.

While these individual scientific studies and data-sharing efforts are essential, they are not enough. Research findings need to be publicly distributed so that the community can take action to improve existing water quality and avoid future water-quality problems. Representatives from the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network, Tompkins County Water Resources Council and Cornell University are working to develop a publicly available data clearinghouse.

This Partnership would not be possible without the support of the Water Resources Council members, Cornell staff and faculty and the Tompkins County Planning Department. 🐾



"After any major storm, the water off Stewart Park swirls murky brown," notes Sharon Anderson, Watershed Steward for the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network. "The eastern corner can be dense with weeds in the summer. It doesn't take a scientist to know that the water isn't clean but it may take scientists to help the community uncover why the problem exists, to what extent we can improve the water and the most cost-effective methods of gaining clean water."

Dense *Myriophyllum spicatum* canopy at lake surface. Cayuga Lake, Ithaca, NY, August 1989

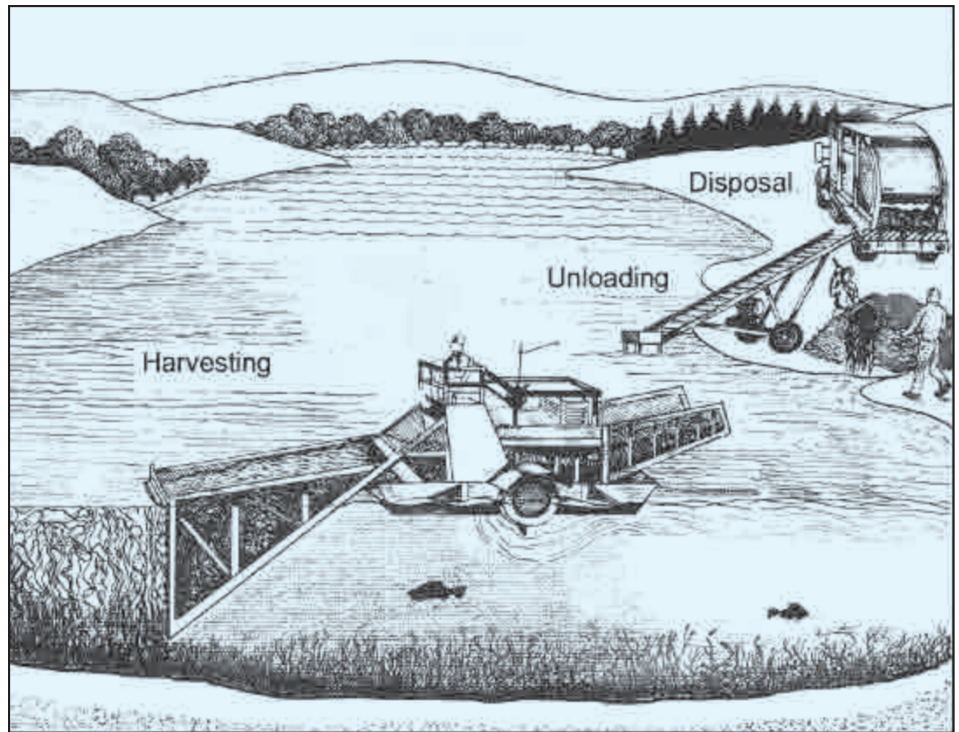
Cutting Helps Control Water Weeds

By Sharon Anderson, Watershed Steward

Fewer weeds clogged boat propellers at the north end of the lake thanks to the harvesting efforts of Cayuga and Seneca County Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD). In prior years Cayuga SWCD has removed around 500 tons (wet weight) of weeds and Seneca SWCD totals are not far behind. Thanks to a new weed harvester the Seneca County side of the lake should see even better weed removal this year.

Mechanical weed harvesters cut then vacuum up the upper portions of rooted aquatic plants. The collected plants are then brought to shore for proper disposal, typically composting. Harvesters are sometimes unfairly blamed for floating bits of plants that wash to shore. While some plant fragments escape harvesting, more are usually released by boat traffic through areas that have not been harvested. Wind may concentrate the green bits from either harvesting or boats, much to the ire of shoreline residents.

Harvesting is used to open up boat channels, public launch sites and other high use areas where dense vegetation poses the greatest nuisance. Harvesters do not work well in shallow areas, small spaces, such as between docks, or if the weeds are thinly scattered. Access to lakeshore areas where the weeds can be offloaded and the harvester launched may also limit where harvesters can be used.



Mechanical harvesting removes the cut weeds from the lake. The collected weeds are brought to shore and loaded into trucks manually or mechanically.

Harvesting is not a panacea. Many lakeshore residents believe harvesters are simply very large riding mowers. In fact, harvesting usually leaves roots intact, meaning that new vegetation can grow and tangle boat propellers. This means that harvesting must be repeated to maintain clear channels. The long-term benefit is limited to removing the cut vegetation, thereby removing some phosphorus that would otherwise be available for plant growth the next year. A down-side of harvesting is that removing the growing tips also removes the insects

that feed on and help check the growth of Eurasian watermilfoil. These insects are so effective they caused a crash in the growth of Eurasian watermilfoil in Cayuga Lake a couple decades ago.

Mechanical weed harvesting is neither good nor bad. Like most weed control strategies, it works best when combined with other measures such as long-term reduction of phosphorus and sediment loading to the lake. 🐦

Twin Parks Offer Two Styles of Lake Access *continued from cover*

The Cayuga Lake Salt Company occupied the land from 1891 through 1962. Up to 100 employees worked to extract salt-water brine from two deep wells that was then evaporated to create a high-grade table salt. Cargill bought out the Salt Company and moved the operation to its current location, still taking advantage of deep, natural salt deposits. A fire at the Salt Point in 1962 caused the original plant to be bulldozed. Until the recent improvements, it

was easy to find remnants of the plant, which had been spread across the site. NYS Department of Environmental Conservation purchased the lakeshore property in the 1960's and left it undeveloped.

Myers Park and Salt Point are located in the southern part of the Town of Lansing off of Route 34B. In the future the Town of Lansing hopes to connect the two parks via a pedestrian bridge. 🐦

New Environmental Education Center Opens

By Marcy Neumire, Seneca Meadows Community Relations Coordinator

Seneca Meadows believes that environmental education is the key to establishing a better world for current and future generations. In July of 2008, Seneca Meadows will put its beliefs into action with the opening of its Seneca Meadows Environmental Education Center just north of its facility on Route 414 in Waterloo.

The Center will include a fully equipped science laboratory and an educational exhibit room that will educate students and other members of the community about wetlands, recycling, waste management, alternative energy, environmental protection and environmental monitoring. The structure of the Center is divided into two programs:

1. A high school science program that will satisfy State standards and enhance curriculums, (with particular attention to biology, chemistry and environmental science), by giving students hands-on field and laboratory experience in the study of a brook, pond and wetlands that surround the Center; and,
2. Adult and children's programs that will educate the local community on environmental issues through entertaining events and activities.


The Company

Seneca Meadows, Inc. (SMI) is a waste management company in Seneca Falls, New York, that provides for the environmentally responsible disposal of non-hazardous solid waste, tire recycling, and the generation of electricity.

As the fourth largest industrial employer in Seneca

County, and the primary disposal facility for hundreds of businesses and municipalities in and around New York State, Seneca Meadows also plays an integral role in its local community and region.

Since its inception in 1983, SMI has demonstrated a commitment to its community and the environment that has gained the respect and support of residents, state and local political leaders, and environmental and civic organizations. This support has been exhibited with honors that include the 2003 Seneca County Chamber of Commerce Business of the Year award, a 2004 congressional proclamation, and the support of recognized environmental groups such as, Ducks Unlimited, the Audubon Society, and Trout Unlimited.

For more information about the Seneca Meadows Environmental Education Center, you can contact their community relations coordinator at (315) 539-5624. 


Editors Note: The Cayuga Lake Watershed Network appreciates Seneca Meadow, Inc. support for previous educational programs on septic system care and its funding commitment toward the forthcoming weed management brochure.

We are now accepting nominations for the Morehouse Award

The Morehouse award honors the memory of Dave Morehouse, who not only founded the Watershed Network and the Intermunicipal organization, but who also exemplified dedication to watershed issues throughout his life. Each year his numerous contributions are remembered through this award sponsored by the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network and the Cayuga Lake Intermunicipal Organization.

This award recognizes a person or organization whose efforts have made a positive difference in the protection of the Cayuga Lake Watershed. Nominees must have taken an active role in the protection of Cayuga Lake watershed over a minimum of five years, and their actions must have had a lasting impact in current and future watershed protection. Nominees do not need to live in the watershed.

The Dave Morehouse Award

recipient will be recognized at Lakefest, August 23rd at Goose Watch Winery. 

Nominations must be submitted to the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network by Saturday, August 9th, 2008. Electronic submissions preferred. Send to manager@cayugalake.org or Morehouse Award, P.O. Box 303, Interlaken, NY 14847.



Hyla arborea,
European Tree Frog

Amphibians: An Extinction Crisis

by Kevin Zippel, Program Director, Amphibian Ark

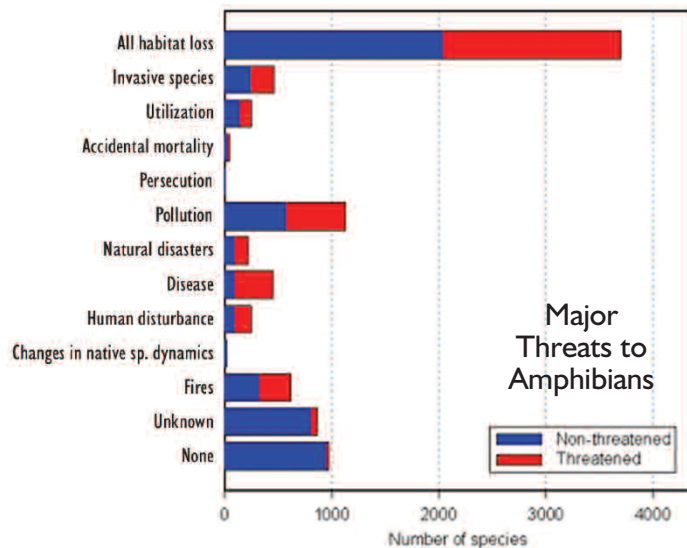
Summer is upon us now. The spring peepers and American toads have quieted down, their calls replaced by the banjo-pluck call of the green frog and raccoon-like call of the gray treefrog.

In fact, the tadpoles of the American toads are already metamorphosing and invading our shores in knots! But not all of the world's amphibians are faring so well. A 2004 assessment of all 6000 amphibian species revealed that nearly half of all those species are declining, one third are known to be threatened by extinction, another quarter are so poorly known and presumably rare that we simply classify them 'Data Deficient', and approximately 165 have gone extinct in recent times. For every threatened bird or mammal species, there are 2-3 amphibians nearing extinction. Amphibians have been around for 360 million years; they watched the dinosaurs

droughts and heat waves. Introduced species and overcollection are also significant threats. But perhaps one of the most shocking threats is an emergent disease called amphibian chytrid. Thought to have evolved in South Africa, this disease was presumably spread throughout the world through the trade of African clawed frogs, a species once used for human pregnancy tests and now a staple of development research and the pet trade. When amphibian chytrid arrives in an area where species are susceptible, like the mountains of Central America, it can eliminate 50% of species and 80% of individuals in just a few months. There is currently no way to treat

it in the wild. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has called it "the worst infectious disease ever recorded among vertebrates in terms of the number of species impacted, and its propensity to drive them to extinction."

Any of these threats alone would be a significant challenge for amphibians to overcome, but working together they create a perfect storm for extinction. All of these threats share a common origin: they are caused by people. We are at a unique point in the history of the planet. This is not the first time one group of organisms has brought on a mass extinction event, e.g., the "oxygen holocaust" created by the first photosynthetic bacteria when the



*We do not
inherit
the Earth
from our
ancestors,
we borrow it
from our
children.*

—NATIVE AMERICAN
PROVERB

come and go. Yet their extinction rate today is estimated to be 200-2700 times greater than anything in their past, and perhaps as much as 25,000-45,000 times greater when you include all those species in the process of going extinct now. It is the greatest extinction event in their history, and perhaps the greatest conservation challenge in the history of humanity, comparable to the extinction of the dinosaurs.

The causes of amphibian extinctions are diverse and synergistic. Habitat loss is the greatest factor by far, as amphibians—residents of both water and land—are doubly susceptible. [Note: The number one cause of habitat loss is farming animals for food. United Nations research suggests that reducing amount of animal products in ones diet has many positive environmental effects.] Pollution also affects many amphibian species, permeating the thin amphibian skin that otherwise helps them to drink and breathe. Climate change is becoming an ever greater factor, driving populations to greater latitudes and altitudes and wreaking havoc through

earth was half its current age. But it is the first time it is being done by organisms who, "by the power of a glorious evolutionary accident called intelligence" quipped Gould, comprehend the impact of their actions. Humanity is at a crossroads. We can either continue utilizing the short-term survival instincts that served us well in the past by growing our population exponentially and consuming the planet's precious resources unsustainably, jeopardizing biodiversity, entire ecosystems, and the earth's very ability to support life. Or we can use our intellect to reveal long-term survival instincts, looking beyond our immediate desires to consider our long-term needs, voluntarily limiting our growth and consumption and so becoming responsible *stewards* of all life on earth.

Stay tuned for pt. 3 on amphibians this fall, including information about how Amphibian Ark and partners are trying to be the responsible stewards which amphibians so desperately need. If you want to read ahead, visit www.AmphibianArk.org. 🐸

Join Us for the 11th Annual Celebration of Lakefest!

Saturday, August 23rd, 12:00 – 4:00 pm at Goose Watch Winery in Romulus, NY the Watershed Network will be celebrating our 11th Annual Lakefest, which promises to be a fun-filled event for the whole family.

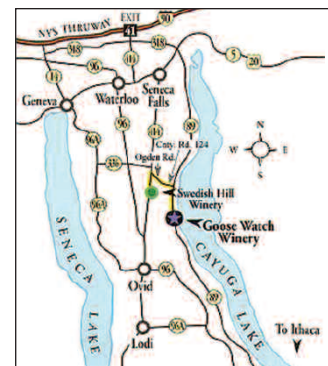
The public is invited to our free picnic lunch starting at noon, during which you will again be entertained by the music of The Hunter Family, a Canadian folk group.

During and following lunch, there will be many educational and informative displays for adults and children alike. Displays will represent other environmentally-concerned organizations and also include scientific representations and models of hydrological systems in order to better understand the intricate processes of our watershed.

Following lunch, we will be entertained by the Waterloo Library Players followed by face painting and other activities for the children. In addition, the Watershed Network will be presenting its annual Morehouse and Lake Friendly Farms Awards. This is a chance for us to acknowledge and appreciate the great work that is being done to protect our watershed.

Lakefest will end with our annual membership meeting to update our members on changes, happenings, and achievements within the organization. During this meeting, bylaw changes will be presented and voted on. These changes will be available on the organization's website as of August 1st or as a hard-copy upon request.

Take this opportunity to join us in celebrating another year of hard work in the watershed and learning about our efforts. We hope to see you there! 🐾



11th Annual Lakefest – Saturday August 23rd Goose Watch Winery, Romulus, NY

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| 12:00 – 3:30 | Displays and Information by Local Organizations, including a hydrology exhibit, fossils, critters and much more! |
| 12:00 – 1:00 | Picnic Lunch and Music by The Hunter Family |
| 1:00 – 3:00 | Door Prizes Drawn and Silent Auction |
| 1:30 – 2:00 | Waterloo Library Players: The cast from Nunsense will amuse young and old. |
| 2:00 – 2:30 | Face Painting with Debbie. |
| 2:30 – 3:00 | Activities for the Kids with Kari. |
| 3:00 | Awards |
| 3:30 – 4:00 | Annual Membership Meeting |

The Mission

The Cayuga Lake Watershed Network seeks to protect and improve the ecological health, economic vitality and overall beauty of the watershed through education, communication and leadership.



P.O. Box 303
Interlaken, NY 14847

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- 🐾 Education
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