

It Takes a Network to Protect a Watershed

Network News

CAYUGA LAKE WATERSHED 2024 i1-2



Taken on April 8 2024, at the height of the total solar eclipse. Gazing southward along Cayuga Lake toward Canoga, from the eastern shoreline at Harris Park in the Village of Cayuga. As the sky darkened, spectators and birds alike fell silent, and the temperature dropped substantially during 2 minutes of totality. The first half of 2024 has been full of significant events, including the eclipse that swept across the Finger Lakes, and a move for the CLWN office from Aurora to Ulysses following the closure of Wells College.

LIZ KREITINGER

Steward's Desk | Migrating East to West | Birds & Bees | 2024 Canoga Community Conference | Hydrilla Treatment Continues | DEC Invasive Species Grant | Exploring Cayuga Lake | Annual Appeal | Lake Friendly Living | Congrats Erin Peruzzini & Eden Lewis | Owasco Rules & Regulations Update | Upcoming Events



FROM THE Steward's Desk



With huge relief, as of July 1st, we are excited to report that the Cayuga Nature Center in Ulysses is officially the new home of the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network!

This is an exciting fit for both organizations, given our shared dedication to education, conservation, and celebration of the Cayuga Lake watershed. Personally, I attended many camps and school programs at the Cayuga Nature Center (CNC) as a kid and have a lot of memories and appreciation for its role in the community fostering ecological exploration and ethics for young people... as well as epic games of capture the flag.

For those who are not as familiar with CNC, the organization was founded in 1981 to provide nature education opportunities to area youth, principally through summer camps. In 2013 it merged with the Paleontological Research Institution (PRI) and expanded its onsite exhibits and programs. Indoor and outdoor programs and exhibits encourage visitors to explore and understand the natural history of the Cayuga Lake Basin as part of the regional and global ecosystems. The Nature Center's 100 acres of woodland and old field overlooking Cayuga Lake are home to a six-story treehouse, a gorge and waterfall, and more than 5 miles of walking trails.



AMANDA SCHMITT PIHA

Our new home at the Cayuga Nature Center! CLWN staff Molly and Liz, with intern Kira Walter, meet around the big work table.

NEW MAILING ADDRESS:
Cayuga Lake Watershed Network
POB 1033
Trumansburg, NY, 14886
Mail sent to our Aurora POB will be forwarded here.

We have made it to our destination but are still in transition and recovering from the big migration! Over the next several months, we will be settling in and unpacking. The office is air-conditioned and the space is large, the building is filled with history, beautiful displays, ample taxidermy, and occasional gaggles of campers who shuffle through the halls during their brief indoor breaks. Our new hall is shared with the office of Chris Wolfe, Manager of Live Animals, and his sweet sixteen-year-old Dachshund Mila who, along with the rest of the PRI team, has been incredibly welcoming.

Recent restructuring at PRI means that the CNC lodge is closed to visitors for the year, but the public is welcome to enjoy the outdoor spaces and CLWN guests and visitors are welcome to join us for programs and meetings by appointment, and we hope you will.

As for Aurora, we will be back in town for events soon! Join us for our Annual Picnic & Meeting on August 29 at Apple Station Winery in Cayuga. Learn more and pre-register at www.cayugalake.org.

Liz Kreitinger

Liz Kreitinger, Steward & Executive Director

Embrace the Lake Spring 2024

Liz Kreitinger Steward

Thank you to all the litter-cleanup organizers and volunteers for another great season of cleanups across the Cayuga Lake watershed this past spring! The twelve participating groups are listed below. You can view their efforts in a photo essay at our website on the Embrace the Lake page under the Get Involved heading.

- Bob Gravani, Mary-Lynn Cummings, and the Ithaca Rotarians
- Jason Gorman and the Finger Lakes Land Trust
- Jodi Baldwin and Howland Farm Museum

- Cait Darfler, the Ulysses Conservation and Sustainability Advisory Committee and Tru-Uly Earth Care Team
- Travis Kitch and Ludlowville friends
- West Shore Neighborhood Association
- Barb Reese and the Mynderse Academy Seneca Green Club
- Laura Buttenbaum and Greenstar Co-op
- Dave Eckhardt, Cayuga Climate Action and Poplar Ridge Friends Meeting
- Jeremy Smith and the Village of Union Springs
- Mitch Raymond and Newfield Greenup Day

- Meghan Reiff and the Varna Community Association

The Cayuga Lake Watershed Network has been collaborating with community groups to keep our waterways clean since 2009. From March to May churches, Scout troops, community groups and families organize clean-up events, to clean up roadsides and waterways, to keep trash out of Cayuga Lake and its creeks and ditches. If you would like to organize a cleanup in 2025 reach out to Molly, programs@cayugalake.org.

Migrating East to West:

CLWN finds a new home at the Cayuga Nature Center

As many of you know, Wells College has generously donated office space to the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network since 2008. On April 29th, along with everyone else, we learned that the college would be closing after the end of the Spring academic semester and that we would need to be completely moved out of campus in just two short months.

Watching this process unfold from the inside was heartbreaking. We are so grateful to the faculty, staff, students, and administration who have supported us during our time there, and wish them the best in their next chapters. Special thanks and recognition to Marian Brown, Jackie Schnurr, Leah Elliot, Ben Steiner, and Jim Babcock.

Finding an affordable new home for CLWN during one of our busiest times of the year posed sudden and significant challenges.

As a small non-profit, we aren't able to pay market rates for office rent, so we set out looking for donated or subsidized



Just a small token of our deep gratitude for many happy years of residence at Wells College in Aurora. Thank you!

arrangements. Fueled by the hope that exciting new doors would open, staff, board members, and Network members got to work searching and assessing options.

As part of this effort, we put out a call to action for community assistance, and the response was overwhelming! Thank you to everyone who reached out with suggestions, shared contacts, and worked their personal and professional networks to identify possible new locations for us.

June was an exceedingly challenging but rewarding month. CLWN hosted four free educational community events including our Community Conference in Canoga, and during the final week, the staff and volunteers got to work packing the office. Special thanks to Tee-Ann Hunter, Ursula Hilsdorf, Nate Baker, and Hank Newman for their help

packing and moving and to the Ithaca Ice Company for lending us a perfectly sized cargo van.

Finger Lakes unite in support of Birds and Bees Protection Act

FLRWA Political Education Committee

In late December 2023, Governor Kathy Hochul signed into law the Birds and Bees Protection Act (S.1856-A/A.7640), which protects New Yorkers, pollinators, birds, and other wildlife from potentially harmful toxins by prohibiting the use of certain neonicotinoid pesticide (neonics) treated corn, soybean, or wheat seeds and neonicotinoid pesticides for outdoor ornamental plants and turfs. With this groundbreaking legislation, New York now leads the nation in removing these environmental toxins that cause significant hardship to pollinators, birds, and aquatic insects that are critical to the health of our watershed ecosystems.

Passing this legislation was a hard-fought battle that brought together a host of concerned citizen groups.

Representatives of watershed groups from the Finger Lakes Regional Watershed Alliance (FLRWA) participated in strategy meetings with the Sierra Club and the National Resources Defense Council.

FLRWA Board Members created an educational, science-backed presentation, complete with references to dozens of peer-reviewed studies, which we shared with the individual lake/watershed associations and with representatives from the Governor's office and the media. FLRWA also authored letters to all legislators representing the Finger Lakes region. FLRWA's 2023 statement on limiting the use of neonicotinoid pesticides can be viewed at the CLWN website on the Where We Stand page,

under the About heading.

While the approval of this bill was a great victory for protecting the Finger Lakes and their watersheds, its full implementation still requires details to be worked out over the next few years. What is clear, however, is that this law will now require farmers and turf managers to implement science-backed best-practice integrated pest management (IPM) strategies into their use of insecticides to actively combat insect pest infestations.

The Finger Lakes Regional Watershed Alliance and member organizations will remain vigilant and will continue to advocate for policies that keep our lake waters and watersheds safe, healthy, and contamination-free, both now and for generations to come.

Founded in 2010, the Finger Lakes Regional Watershed Alliance (FLRWA)'s central purpose is to bring together the members, expertise and desires of the Finger Lakes watershed associations to preserve and protect their watersheds with a collective regional voice. FLRWA members believe that a common cross-Finger Lakes positioning regarding the issues that face our lakes can be more

successful than individual lake and watershed associations acting independently. Along with representatives from the 10 other Finger Lakes community-based associations, CLWN Steward Liz Kreitinger serves FLRWA as the voting Board Member for Cayuga Lake and recently joined the Political Education Committee.

2024 Canoga Community Conference

Kira Walter Intern & **Liz Kreitinger** Steward

Thank you to all friends of CLWN who attended our Community Conference on June 20th at the Canoga Volunteer Fire Department!

WE had a fantastic turnout with over 70 people! It was wonderful reconnecting with longtime supporters and new attendees eager to learn more about the Cayuga Lake Watershed.

The conference began with buzzing discussion as partner organizations set up booths around the open space. After brief introductory remarks by Steward Kreitinger, our four guest speakers provided updates on behalf of their organizations and fielded questions from the audience. As always, the crowd had many important questions which we wish there had been more time for! We are continuing to consider how to organize these

events to facilitate deeper discussion—one of the most valuable benefits of community programs.

Our first guest presenter was Anthony Prestigiaco, Supervisor of the NYS DEC Finger Lakes Watershed Hub who presented “Cayuga

Lake Water Quality, Harmful Algal Blooms, and Watershed Progress.” He highlighted long-term trends in Cayuga Lake total phosphorus levels, which has not experienced significant change since the 1990s while chlorophyll-a, and measures of algal abundance, have increased slightly since that time—consistent with statewide patterns. Prestigiaco’s talk noted interagency collaborations, the NYHABs tracking program as well as funding which has been directed to Cayuga Lake Watershed for water quality projects—over 40 projects between 2013 and 2022 for phosphorus reduction and more than \$14 million in funding for projects ranging from cover crops to land acquisition to septic pump out assistance.

Dr. Grascen Shidemantle, Executive Director of the Community Science Institute shared insights from 6 Years of Local Volunteer Monitoring for Harmful Algal Blooms on Cayuga. Also, new this year, they are working with the community to begin documenting “clump HABs”. Little is known about clump HABs, so CSI is working with volunteers to begin a new investigation into their composition and patterns in our lake. Shidemantle emphasized the importance of volunteers in CSI programs and encouraged others to join.

Max Heitner from the Finger Lakes Land Trust provided some exciting updates about land conservation in our watershed. The FLLT oversees 50 different preserves around Cayuga Lake. In May, Bell Station was finally transferred to the DEC and is now Cayuga Shores Wildlife Management Area, and in June,



Board member Ed Currier makes sure that no one goes home hungry.

LIZ KREITINGER

Tony Prestigiaco, NYS DEC Hub, presents on Cayuga Lake water quality and agency projects at the Canoga Community Conference.



LIZ KREITINGER

the FLLT Sims-Jennings Preserve at Cayuga Cliffs opened to the public. Heitner concluded by emphasizing FLLT's 5-Point Water Initiative, which includes investments in restoration activities and partnerships with watershed and lake organizations like CLWN.

Town of Fayette Supervisor Jeff Trout and Erin Peruzzini, District Manager of the Seneca County Soil and Water Conservation District, concluded the program, highlighting water quality protection projects in Seneca County. Investments in water quality are ongoing, including progress on a major sanitary sewer project that would move many lakeshore residents from septic to

public sewer in the towns of Fayette and Varick. Peruzzini provided an overview of their boots-on-the-ground program work with municipal and private landowners, farms and public education.

To conclude the conference, Erin Peruzzini was recognized by CLWN staff and Board Members with the James C. White Memorial Prize (see page 9).

The conference slides can be found online at our website on the Conference Presentations page, under the Resources heading.

Hydrilla treatment continues, fragment intercepted at Cayuga Lake State Park

Liz Kreitinger Steward

Managing invasive Hydrilla (*Hydrilla verticillata*) in Cayuga Lake requires a combination of sustained chemical treatments, public education, and cooperative efforts from lake users to prevent further spread. Since its discovery in the inlet in 2011, each Hydrilla infestation location has been targeted with herbicide treatments which have reduced plant density and slowed its spread.

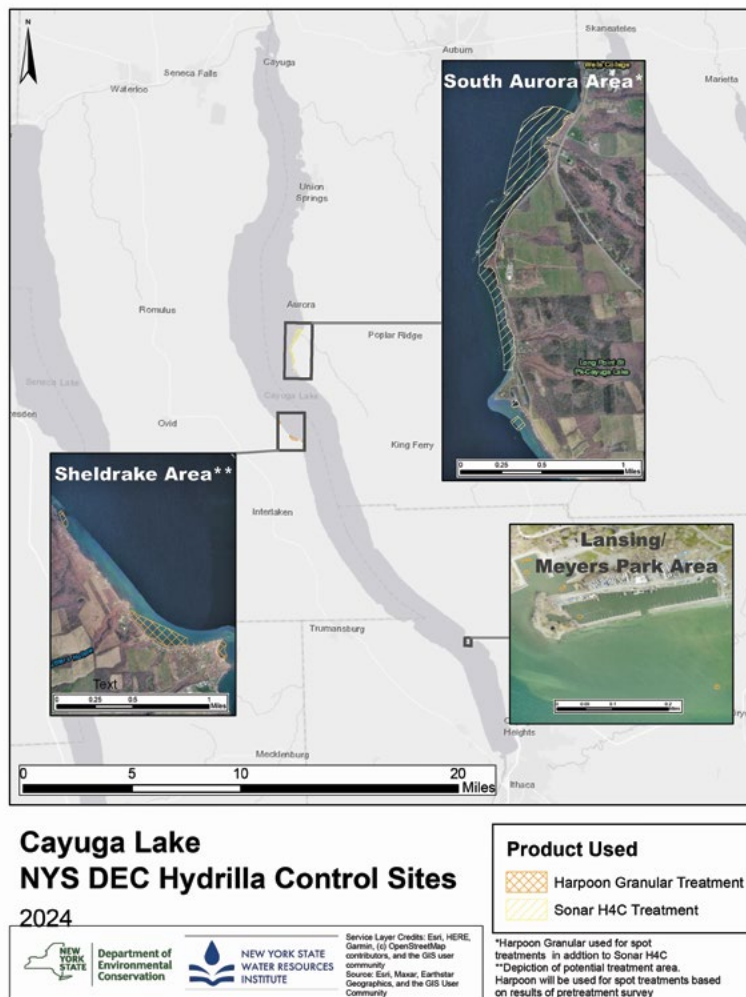
However, preventing the spread of Hydrilla by local boat traffic remains a significant challenge. In June, for the first time this year, Hydrilla was detected by a Finger Lakes Partnership for Invasive Species Management (FL-PRISM) Watercraft Steward at Cayuga Lake State Park who was inspecting a motorized kayak exiting the lake. This is the furthest point north in Cayuga that Hydrilla has been detected to date. Preventing Hydrilla from spreading into the shallow northern shelf of Cayuga Lake and the canal system is a top priority due to its vigorous growth which can choke waterways for recreation and crowd

out other species. In response to the finding, the DEC and FL-PRISM have put additional effort towards surveys in areas surrounding the park. As of the beginning of August, no

established fragments of Hydrilla have been found in the area.

Public awareness campaigns urging lake users to “Clean, Drain, Dry” boats and equipment, along with voluntary inspections by Watercraft Stewards, rely heavily on public cooperation, especially at private docks and informal launch sites. The Cayuga Lake Watershed Network’s education activities continue to focus on these actions and invasive species awareness.

Coordination with local partners is facilitated through the Cayuga Lake Hydrilla Task Force which now includes members from Tompkins, Cayuga and Seneca Counties. As part of an ongoing effort to manage Hydrilla in Cayuga Lake, herbicide treatments administered by DEC (map, left) and the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) continued this Summer in all three lakeshore counties. Surveys to monitor treatment effectiveness, plant community response, and possible new patches are ongoing. For details on treatment schedules and extent, water monitoring for herbicide levels, and herbicide information sheets, visit the Hydrilla Information & Action page under the Resources heading at our website.



NYS DEC Grant for Invasive Species Education and Action

With plant community paddle!

In January 2024, New York State Senator Lea Webb (SD52) announced that over \$250,000 would be awarded to projects in Cortland and Tompkins Counties for invasive species management. This funding is part of \$3 million in state funding awarded through the DEC's Invasive Species Grant Program to 43 projects across New York to combat the negative impacts of invasive species on New York's natural resources, economy, and communities.

The Tompkins County Soil and Water Conservation District, will receive \$122,705 from this funding for Cayuga Lake Aquatic Invasive Species Watercraft Spread Prevention, Boat Steward Education, and Outreach/Voluntary Inspection. As a project partner, CLWN will be contracted to work with the District and other local partners to increase education and outreach programming over the next 3 years.

Jonathan Negley, Tompkins County Soil and Water Conservation District Manager, said:

“This funding opportunity allows a further advancement of invasive species goals specifically for eradication of Hydrilla in Cayuga Lake, but also many other invasive species threatening the waters of Cayuga and all of the Finger Lakes.

In partnership with our project management team, which includes the Town of Lansing, Cayuga Lake Watershed Network, and the Finger Lakes Partnership for Invasive Species Management (FL-PRISM); the funding awarded to Tompkins County will help to install a watercraft decontamination station [at Myers Park], hire boat launch stewards and increase the awareness of invasive species threats at their point of entry.

We are grateful for New York State providing this assistance as one piece of a large puzzle to tackle the problem of invasive species.”

Remember to always Clean, Drain and Dry boats and gear when traveling between waterbodies, to help prevent the spread of invasive species in the Finger Lakes and beyond.



LIZ KREITINGER

Exploring Salmon Creek by kayak.

Exploring Cayuga Lake—Guided Paddle

In response to this new award, CLWN worked with FL-PRISM to provide a new event for the 2024 NYS Invasive Species Awareness Week (NYISAW), at Myers Point in Lansing.

Pre-Registration quickly hit capacity but only some braved the stormy skies on June 8th to come out for our new NYISAW event! The event was hosted by the CLWN Steward and special guest Josh Neff from the FL-PRISM who joined us at Myers Park to introduce the underwater plant

community to participants, including some great native species.

The lake was too windy for paddling, but we had a good time exploring the outlet of Salmon Creek and there were plenty of plants to identify in the park marina. Participants left with new knowledge about invasive species

impacts, the diversity of plants in our lake, and how to participate in the Macrophyte Survey Program.

Thank you to Paddle-n-More and owner Jen Wells for providing kayaks and gear free for participants, and the Tompkins County SWCD for their support!

THIS MESSAGE IS FOR Cayuga Lake Watershed Network members & all supporters of:

Clean water for drinking, swimming, and boating; the good health of Cayuga Lake; and the joys of waterfalls, creeks, gorges, and wetlands!

Please give generously to our 2024 Annual Campaign! This year, with your continued support & involvement we will:

Grow our water quality education and action programs to reduce pollution entering our waterways – via Community Conferences, Lake Friendly Living programs, and more. This is the foundation of all our work.

Strengthen strategic partnerships within our watershed, across the Finger Lakes and NYS to advocate for science-based watershed stewardship for these critical issues: Harmful

Algal Blooms, climate change, invasive species and contaminants of concern including PFAS.

Connect with more people like YOU, to unite with us in our mission as dedicated stewards of Cayuga Lake and its watershed - for generations to come.

Help us achieve these goals to protect & conserve our lake and its watershed.

Liz Kreitinger, *Steward/Executive Director*
Molly Newman, *Program Associate and the CLWN Board of Directors*

CHARLIE CAPPELLINO

How to donate to our Annual Campaign today

MAIL A CHECK

to us using the enclosed pre-addressed envelope or your own envelope addressed to Cayuga Lake Watershed Network
P.O. Box 1033, Trumansburg NY 14886.

GO TO OUR DONATE PAGE

online at www.cayugalake.org

CONTACT US

for information about other giving options:
programs@cayugalake.org or 315-367-4805.



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THANK YOU – your generosity inspires our work for Cayuga Lake every day.

TENZIN CHOPAK

LEO LOUIS

TENZIN CHOPAK

Lake Friendly Living Awareness Month Activities & Award

PLEASE JOIN LFL and make a difference wherever you live!

The Cayuga Lake Watershed Network is a proud member of the FLX-LAKE FRIENDLY LIVING COALITION! During May, we celebrated the 4th Annual FLX Lake Friendly Living Awareness Month, which focuses on empowering communities to preserve and protect our greatest natural resource, the Finger Lakes.

Coalition member organizations from across the Finger Lakes hosted impact days for watershed residents, from rain barrel workshops to protecting Eastern Hemlock trees from the invasive Hemlock Woolly Adelgid.

On June 2nd, the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network hosted a “Native Species for Health Watersheds Tour” at the Plantsmen Nursery in Lansing. Network members and new friends joined nursery owner Dan Segal for a behind-the-scenes look at nursery operations and learned about native species best adapted to our climate and soils. He highlighted plants suited for beneficial rain gardens and shoreline buffers, attracting pollinators and more. Thank you to Dan and his team for hosting this popular event, we hope to do this again in the future!

On June 14th, leaders of the Finger Lakes Lake Friendly Living Coalition, including CLWN Steward Liz Kreitinger, were honored by Senator Rachel May and Assembly Member Anna Kelles with a resolution commemorating the 4th annual Lake Friendly Living Awareness Month.

Please join the region-wide Lake Friendly Living movement! You can find more information about the Lake Friendly Living program and sign up to participate (it's all free) at our website under the Get Involved heading.



Liz Kreitinger at the Network's display during the Plantsmen Nursery tour.

LAURIANNE FLEMMING



Plantsmen Nursery owner Dan Segal shares information about the best native plants for local uses.

LIZ KREITINGER

Congratulations Erin Peruzzini, Recipient of the 2024 James C. White Memorial Award!

Dr. James C. White was a longtime lakeshore resident and lover of the lake, and founding Chair of the CLWN in 1997-98. Following his 2018 death, his family and friends designated the Network as a recipient of memorial donations in his honor.

Each year, in the spirit of CLWN Founder Jim White, we recognize an individual who has made outstanding contributions to the efforts of the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network to preserve and enhance the watershed.

At this year's Spring Conference in Canoga, the CLWN Steward was joined by founding member Dr. Liz Thorndike, colleague, friend, and neighbor of Jim White, to introduce the award, as well as two current Board Members, to recognize the outstanding work of our award recipient: Erin Peruzzini, Manager of the Seneca County Soil and Water Conservation District.

Heidi Lott, CLWN Board Member, said, "On behalf of the Seneca County Agricultural Community and the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network, I would like to thank Erin for being a great resource, for her commitment to our farmers, and for her commitment to



With deep gratitude to Erin Peruzzini, Seneca County Soil & Water Conservation District Manager, for her visionary work on behalf of the Cayuga Lake watershed.

protecting our watershed."

Ed Currier, CLWN Board Member and Lake Friendly Living Coalition Liaison, also thanked Erin: "As a conservation advocate for the wise use of our natural resources, Erin is a dedicated educator and communicator of best management practices for farms and residential properties throughout the county. The Cayuga Lake Watershed Network was an early adopter of the Finger Lakes LFL program. Erin and staff developed an updated Homeowners Guide and Pledge Card for the program, consulting with us to provide the Network with two fine documents. The financial contribution of SWCD to publish 1000 copies was a significant step toward expanding this much-improved communication tool about LFL. With deep gratitude, we thank Erin for her excellence!"

Full recognition write-ups can be found in the Awards list at our website under the header Where We Stand.

2023 Emerging Watershed Leaders Award Presented to Eden C. Lewis

In December 2023, the Network recognized Eden Lewis, Ithaca High School class of 2023, as recipient of the 3rd Emerging Watershed Leaders Award. This award is presented to young individuals who have made significant contributions to the work of our organization and who have contributed meaningfully to watershed sustainability and resilience efforts.

WE honor Eden's work to ignite our youth outreach program and her leadership in climate advocacy beyond the Network. As our 2022 Youth Outreach Intern, she laid the groundwork for the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network's youth engagement program. Eden transformed our rough outline of a youth engagement plan into a rich resource for future work, informed by her passion for inclusive and equitable community engagement.

Chief among her accomplishments was the development of an environmental curriculum plan for educators in the Ithaca City School District, complete with links to lesson plans and other resources.

In honoring Eden, we recognize both her past achievements, and her future as a connector, community organizer, and leader. Thank you, Eden!

Past recipients of the Emerging Watershed Leaders Award include CLWN intern/Wells College student Ashley Benning who received the inaugural award in 2013; and Aaron Bohle, leader of the Cornell Biology Service Leaders, in 2015.



The NYS Dept of Health abandons plans for Owasco Watershed Rules & Regulations review has ended

Liz Kreitinger Steward

ON July 26, Auburn NY leaders met at Emerson Park for a press conference to denounce the decision by the NYS Department of Health to end the years-long process of updating the Owasco Lake Watershed Rules & Regulations (OLWRR). The conference was organized in response to a letter sent by the NYS Department of Health (DOH) earlier in the week, addressed to Auburn Mayor Giannettino and Owasco Supervisor Ed Wagner, stating that the agency “does not intend to move forward with amendments to 10 NYCRR Part 104.1 City of Auburn and Town of Owasco Watershed Rules and Regulations,” therefore terminating the project.

This letter arrived four years after completion of a multi-year community effort to revise and update the OLWRR. The update process began in 2017, after toxins associated with recurring harmful algal blooms (HABs) were found in the City of Auburn and the Town of Owasco’s public drinking water threatening the public health of 45,000 Central New York residents. It was clear that better protections were needed for Owasco Lake for it to

continue to serve as a drinking water source for current and future generations. Between 2017 and 2020, the outdated 1984 OLWRR were revised through a thorough, evidence-based process including significant stakeholder engagement coordinated by the Cayuga County Office of Planning. These locally-approved revisions were submitted to NYS for review in 2020. After four years waiting for approval, we have been informed that this work is being abandoned.

Why should CLWN be concerned about rules and regulations affecting a different watershed? The Cayuga Lake Watershed is directly adjacent to the Owasco Lake Watershed. The City of Auburn public water supply, drawn from Owasco Lake, serves residents within our watershed, and Cayuga Lake shares many of the same water quality issues that Owasco

Lake is currently experiencing.

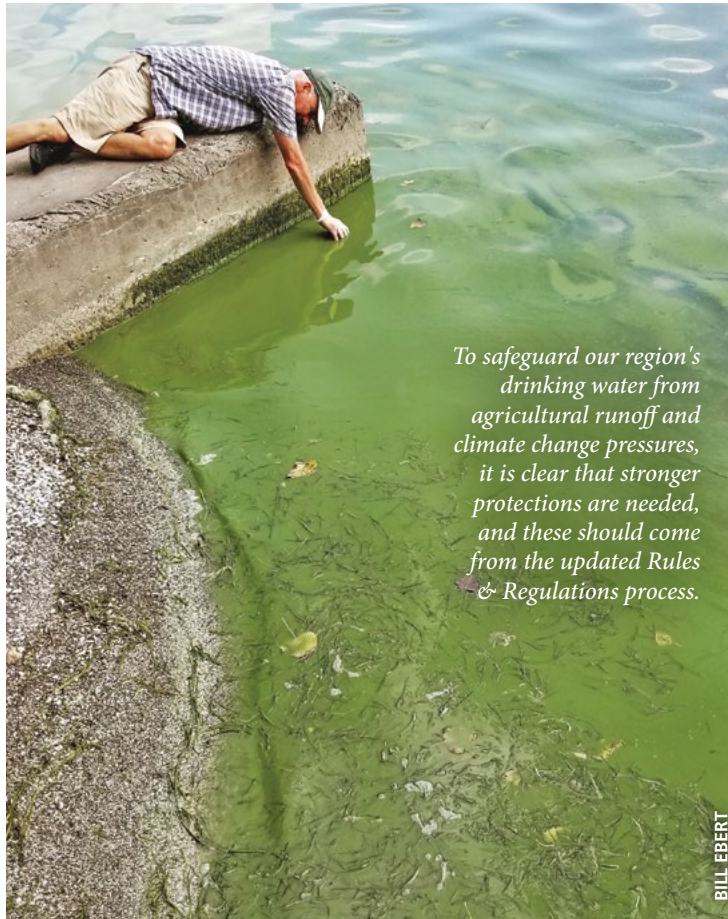
Over the past four years, the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network and partner organizations have repeatedly urged the state to approve these updates, which would modernize the management and protection of this important water resource. Approval of the updated OLWRR would be a signal

to other watersheds with public water supplies, such as our own, to embark on a similar process. This update would ensure that the state would uphold the Public Health Law, in which water purveyors are granted the authority to develop and update watershed rules and regulations for the preservation of public drinking water sources, and protection from point and nonpoint source pollution.

In the years after the draft update was submitted to the NYS for review, the state Department of Health (NYSDOH) unexpectedly began indicating that it does not have the authority from the legislature to create nutrient management regulations for the Owasco Lake watershed in spite of the fact that similar nutrient management regulations are present in the current Skaneateles Lake Watershed

Rules and Regulations. Specifically, the NYSDOH indicated that when the Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) program was established, nutrient management on farms became the sole responsibility of the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYSDAM). It appears they are claiming that NYSDAM has greater legal authority than the Department of Health, when it comes to public drinking water safety.

According to the AEM program website, “Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) is a voluntary, incentive-based program available to all farmers through their local Soil and Water Conservation District. AEM supports common-sense, cost-effective, and science-based decisions to meet farm goals while protecting and conserving New York’s natural



To safeguard our region's drinking water from agricultural runoff and climate change pressures, it is clear that stronger protections are needed, and these should come from the updated Rules & Regulations process.

BILL EBERT

better watershed protection!

resources. By participating in AEM, farmers can document their environmental stewardship and further advance their positive contributions to their communities, our food and bio-systems, the economy, and the environment.”

We do commend the state’s expansion of regulatory approaches and voluntary programs targeting water quality, including the 1994 Agricultural Environmental Management program, 1999 and 2009 Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations requirements, 2003 Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4) requirements, and 2019 Drinking Water Source Protection Program. These are critically important for water quality protection. We urge the state to significantly increase funding and staffing for their robust enforcement and implementation, such as the recent \$1.2M investment in the Eastern Finger Lakes Coalition of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (see page 6). These investments are critical.

However, rising impacts from climate change threaten to undermine progress. To safeguard our region’s drinking water from agricultural runoff and climate change pressures, it is clear that stronger protections are needed, and these should come from the updated Rules & Regulations process.

Earlier this year the City of Auburn, Town of Owasco, and Owasco Watershed Lake Association (OWLA) filed an Article 78 legal challenge, seeking to clarify whether or not the NYS Department of Health has the right to regulate nutrient management practices under updated Owasco Lake Watershed Rules and Regulations. Article 78 is a lawsuit that challenges the actions of administrative agencies and other government bodies. This challenge contends that the laws cited do not firmly establish that NYS Ag & Market’s authority

concerning nutrient management supersedes the Department of Health’s responsibility to promulgate regulations for the protection of public health.

In an address to their members, Ann Robson, past-Owasco Watershed Lake Association President, wrote, “This legal determination will have impacts across all of New York State. Many watersheds, including our own, presently have some agricultural nutrient pollution regulation on the books. If NYS Department of Health’s legal determination is allowed to stand, protections for many watersheds, including our own, will likely be rolled back. We are also joining this filing to help ensure that the NYS Department of Health fulfills its duties for all watersheds in the state.”

The issue of HABs in the Finger Lakes and beyond is having, and will continue to have, a widespread impact in our communities. HABs increasingly threaten public water supplies, result in closed public bathing beaches, and harm tourism and other aspects of our economy including lowering property values.

The future of Watershed Rules and Regulations in NY State continues to unfold. Termination of the Owasco Lake Watershed Rules & Regulations process may result in new movement on the initial Article 78 challenge.

We urge the state of New York to uphold Public Health Law Section 1100, Title 10 of the New York Codes, Rules, and Regulations, in which water purveyors are granted the authority to develop and update watershed rules and regulations for the preservation of public drinking water sources, and for protection from point and nonpoint source pollution. Watershed rules and regulations are a vital element of this protective framework that includes regulations, incentives, and community-driven watershed stewardship.

We know how to reduce nutrient runoff.

The ecological balance in our lake can be disrupted by environmental stressors. These changes benefit the native cyanobacteria, so that when conditions are right, often-toxic Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) emerge. The stressors include nutrient pollution, rising temperatures due to climate change, and the presence of invasive zebra and quagga mussels.

To lessen the presence and impact of HABs, we can reduce nutrient pollution

flowing into the lake. Of the three stressors, that is the one we have the most control over. And we know how to do it! From the farmers who are making use of cover crops and precision fertilizer applications, to landowners growing vegetation buffers along streams, the homeowners investing in septic system maintenance, and all who adopt Lake Friendly Living practices, everyone can help reduce the nutrients flowing into our lake.

There is lots of work being done, and much more is needed. Nonpoint source pollution—runoff from agricultural fields and operations—contributes the major portion (approximately 80%, per NY Dept of Environmental Conservation, Cayuga Lake HABs Action Plan, 2018) of phosphorus inputs to Cayuga Lake. This is where the greatest opportunities for nutrient reductions are.

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Our Mission...

*To advocate for the health
of Cayuga Lake and its
watershed in a changing
world.*

Our Vision...

*A network of individuals,
institutions, and communities
united in protecting our
region's water resources for
people and nature.*

**Cayuga Lake
Watershed Network**

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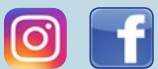
By appointment. Please contact
steward@cayugalake.org
to arrange.

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- Educate**
- Advocate**
- Protect**

Current Resident

Upcoming Events

in the Cayuga Lake Watershed & Neighboring Areas

Call for volunteers:

Please contact Molly Newman programs@cayugalake.org if you can give a few hours a month to help support our work. We seek both expertise & general helpfulness!!

9/21: "Grow Native: It's for the Birds!" 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

Native plant festival & sale. Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge 3395 US 20 Seneca Falls NY 13148. Speakers & demos on marsh management, wetlands, invasives, native plantings, raptor rehab, beekeeping. With vendors & food. Learn more from the Friends of the Montezuma Wetlands Complex <https://friendsofmontezuma.org/event/grow-native-native-plant-festival-and-sale/>

Cayuga Lake Cruises with Discover Cayuga Lake May–October (times vary by cruise type and month)

From relaxing sunset cruises to interactive eco-cruises, there's something for everyone on the MV *Teal*! Cruises typically run 1.5 hours and are accompanied by friendly and knowledgeable crew members. Most cruises are family-friendly and kid-focused, though a few are saved for adult friends. You are welcome to bring your own food and beverages onboard. Learn more at www.discovercayugalake.org