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New York State Department of Environmental Conservation - Division of Water  
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Albany, New York 12233-3508  
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RE: Seneca County Board of Supervisors – Comments to DEC Proposed Phosphorus Limits to Protect Cayuga Lake Water Quality


The Seneca County Board of Supervisors views the quality of the waters of Cayuga Lake to be a critical component in the life and economy of our county and the people whose lives and health revolve around the lake. We further support the actions of the DEC to responsibly manage this resource not only now, but into the future.

Cayuga Lake, as one of the Finger Lakes, flows from south to north, as the lake drains into the Erie Canal/Clyde River watershed and part of the Montezuma Wildlife Refuge, a 10,000 acre federally managed marshland/wetland preserve. The shallowest areas of the lake are in the northern portion, which have historically been subject to invasive aquatic weeds that significantly impair water quality, fish populations and the recreational uses of the lake. Recent studies have shown that almost 70% of the Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) in Cayuga Lake have been found in the northern lake waters.

The waters of Cayuga Lake serve both as drinking water resources for much of Seneca County, as well as other communities on both shores in Seneca, Cayuga, and Tompkins counties. It is the economic engine for tourism and the quality of life that we enjoy in the Finger Lakes region of the state. However, it must not be forgotten that this great lake also serves as part of the waste water recovery process. Two of the three wastewater treatment plants of Seneca County rely on the lake for the output of their effluent outflow via the Seneca-Cayuga Canal to Cayuga Lake. Indirectly, the wastewater outflow from the City of Geneva and the Village of Penn Yan flow to Cayuga Lake, again via the Seneca-Cayuga Canal.

We believe that the reduction of phosphorus runoff into the lake, from whatever the source, is a critical component in the long-term health of the lake, and the communities that rely on its water quality.

Seneca County supports a well-reasoned and scientifically supported plan that will, by reducing the phosphorus load to Cayuga Lake from all sources, contribute to the long-term environmental health and high quality of the waters of Cayuga Lake for generations to come.

  
Robert W. Hayssen, Chairman  
Seneca County Board of Supervisors

5/11/2021  
Date