



News

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Summary of the September 22 CWIO Meeting.

- While not part of the CWIO meeting, a special mention is in order to thank leaders of two other organizations that work watershed-wide to protect Cayuga Lake waters. Hilary Lambert, the Executive Director and Watershed Steward for the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network and Steve Penningroth the Director of the Community Science Institute are both migrating away from their leadership roles. These two both have a deep understanding of the science behind protecting our waters and the wisdom of how to put needs into actions. A HUGE THANK YOU to both Steve and Hilary for all the time and energy you have put into monitoring, research, education, and outreach for the benefit of all of us who enjoy the lake and its tributaries.
- Watershed Manager, Ian Smith, updated CWIO on the inspiring work he is doing in both the Seneca and Cayuga watersheds including the monumental task for drafting a 9 Element Plan for Seneca Lake; work to launch water-friendly guidance for vineyards; an innovative project to reduce flooding by reconnecting floodplain wetlands in the Keuka Lake outlet; applying for funding to develop a ditch assessment tool; assisting with a funding application for a drainage stabilization project with Six Mile Creek Vineyard; and various other sediment and nutrient reduction projects.
- Southern Cayuga Lake Intermunicipal Commission (aka Bolton Point) Director, Steve Riddle, notified CWIO that both the City of Ithaca and Bolton Point have been selected by the state to develop Drinking Water Source Protection Plans (DWSP2). This stakeholder-driven process will be similar to watershed rules and regulations (WRR), but they have no regulatory authority. They would provide a good foundation from which to build WRRs should this step be taken in the future.
- Land Preservation: Andy Zepp updated CWIO on the potential sale of two very large pieces of land adjoining Cayuga Lake. The Bell Station parcel, owned by NYSEG, is 472 acres with 3,400 feet of lake frontage in the Town of Lansing just south of the Town of Genoa. The parcel is completely undeveloped. CWIO along with many other organizations reached out to decision-makers to urge NYSEG to sell the land to the Finger Lakes Land Trust to hold for the eventual ownership by the DEC which intends to keep the land undeveloped. This past weekend, Governor Hochul's office announced she had reached an agreement to have the land permanently protected from development. A huge thanks to Both Senator Pam Helming, Assemblywoman Anna Kelles, Finger Lakes Land Trust Director Andy Zepp and many, many others in their work to protect this land.

The fate of another large parcel of land owned by the Boy Scouts of America in the Town of Covert (Seneca County) is still unknown. Camp Barton with ~2,600 feet of lake frontage is roughly 129 acres which includes Frontenac Creek and an impressive waterfall. The Baden-Powell Boy Scout Council is required to contribute to the Boy Scout legal defense fund which is prompting the potential sale of Camp Barton. CWIO authorized their Executive Committee to write a letter to decisions-makers urging them to preserve the camp as its current low impact use.

- Thanks to a group of students from the Cornell Institute of Public Administration (CIPA) who have agreed to help CWIO with a review of local laws, plans, and policies that municipalities have on the books within the watershed. This information was included as part of the [2000 Cayuga Lake Watershed Characterization](#)¹ (see page 315), but since then, many municipalities have enacted more actions that are protective of water quality. Updating this information

¹ http://www.cayugawatershed.org/documents/CLW_characterization_2000.pdf

would be helpful to identify gaps in regulations/plans/policies that can positively impact water quality.

- Through funding from the NYS Department of State, Kathy Bertuch submitted the final list of prioritized projects for CWIO to consider supporting. CWIO now needs to convene a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) to advise CWIO as it moves forward to facilitate implementation of impactful projects. Please submit names for people you think would be useful to have on this committee (liz.graeper.thomas@gmail.com) as the Membership and Nominating Committee will be working on this soon.

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

10/18: The Community Science Institute is Hiring New Leadership

After 20 years of leadership, vision, and rigorous work to monitor and protect our local streams and lakes, CSI's founding Executive Director, Dr. Stephen Penningroth, is preparing to transition away. The Managing Co-Director position is now open for applications.

The [Community Science Institute](#) (CSI), founded in 2000, is preparing to transition to a team leadership structure that will be shared between a Laboratory Co-Director with primary responsibility for CSI's nationally certified water quality testing lab, which is the bedrock of their mission; and a new Managing Co-Director position with primary responsibilities as follow:

- relationships with local, state and federal government agencies and sister nonprofits
- public dissemination of CSI's findings and their implications for water resource management
- fundraising and financial management.
- personnel responsibilities and decisions shared with the Laboratory Co-Director.

The full position description and application instructions can be found on the '[Employment Opportunities](#)' page under the '[About Us](#)' tab of CSI's website at www.communityscience.org. Applications will be accepted until October 18, 2021.

Cayuga Lake Watershed Network (CLWN) Executive Director

Hilary Lambert has been at the helm of the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network for many years and is ready to move from the driver's seat. The list of accomplishments under her leadership is LONG including a program to monitoring invasive species such as hydrilla and the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid, launching the Lake Friendly Living Program, as well as countless education and outreach programs to help the community understand threats to the lake and what they can do to help. CLWN coordinates with CSI to monitor Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) and their causes. The CLWN Network News highlights the great work being done throughout the watershed and the people who do it. Hilary was foundational in the preparation of the 2017 Cayuga Lake Restoration and Protection Plan for CWIO. We truly appreciate all this work. THANK YOU HILARY!

While the deadline for applications has past, the [description of the job can be found here](#)².

² https://www.cayugalake.org/wp-content/uploads/CLWN_ExecDir_PositionDesc_final.pdf

FUNDING AWARDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

1/10/22: USDA Forest Service Funding Available for Community Forests

The Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program (Community Forest Program) of the USDA Forest Service offers a unique opportunity for communities to acquire and conserve forests that provide public access and recreational opportunities, protect vital water supplies and wildlife habitat, serve as demonstration sites for private forest landowners, and provide economic benefits from timber and non-timber products.

[Requests for Applications for Fiscal Year 2022](#) for the [Community Forest Program](#) (CFP) is now available and due by **January 10, 2022**. [See more about this opportunity](#) ³

11/22/21: NYSEFC Wastewater and Drinking Water Project Funding Available

The New York State Environmental Facilities Corporation (EFC) is offering \$400 million in grants for wastewater and drinking water projects during the 2021-22 state fiscal year. The deadline to submit applications is 5 p.m. on Monday, Nov. 22, 2021.

NYSEFC will be making \$10 million available for asset management programs that will help municipalities monitor, protect and responsibly plan upgrades for their wastewater infrastructure facilities, free of charge. More information available at: <https://www.efc.ny.gov/>

10/29: NYS Pollution Prevention Institute Community Grants

Each year, the NYS Pollution Prevention Institute (P2I) awards funding to projects that seek to improve the health, environmental quality, and economic vitality of communities across New York State.

The program is designed to support initiatives that raise public awareness and understanding of environmental issues and that lead to adoption of sustainable practices. Applications are due **October 29th, 2021**. [For more information](#)⁴.

\$53 Million Awarded for Water Quality Infrastructure Projects Statewide

[Governor Kathy Hochul announced](#) that the New York State Environmental Facilities Corporation (EFC) approved more than \$53 million to help nine municipalities finance their drinking water and wastewater projects. The funds will help fund critical infrastructure projects across the state that protect or improve water quality.

In addition, the Board approved a \$255 million bond that will refinance 64 existing wastewater and drinking water projects at a lower interest rate, saving approximately \$24 million for ratepayers across the state. The bond issuance will also provide long-term financing for 37 existing infrastructure projects. Visit [EFC's website](#) for more information.

³ <https://www.fs.usda.gov/managing-land/private-land/community-forest/program>

⁴ https://www.rit.edu/affiliate/nysp2i/funding?mc_cid=df5773doe4&mc_eid=87e3fa3421#community-grants

TRAININGS and EDUCATION

Replumbing Roadside Ditches to Reduce Floods, Droughts and Degraded Water Quality

At the September meeting of the Finger Lakes Regional Watershed Alliance (FLRWA) Dr. Rebecca Schneider presented her research on the link between roadside ditch systems and water quality. Her presentation is very informative for municipalities as they consider how to best maintain their ditches. [Watch the Presentation](#)⁵.

WATERSHED PROJECTS and MODEL LEGISLATION

Owasco Watershed Makes Progress on Their 9-Element Plan

On September 27, a second public information meeting was held to make progress on a 9-Element (9E) Plan for the Owasco Lake watershed—a plan very similar to the TMDL for Cayuga Lake which accounts for the impacts from phosphorus. A 9E Plan goes beyond and accounts for the effects of other “elements” such as nitrogen, sedimentation, invasive species, etc. This work is part of a grant Cayuga County received from the NYS Department of State and is a recommendation from their [2016 Owasco Lake Watershed Management and Waterfront Revitalization Plan](#)⁶.

[See the presentation](#)⁷.

This project is led by the Cayuga County Department of Planning and Economic Development. The consultant on the project is Ecologic LLC. [See more about this inspirational project](#)⁸.

RESEARCH AND MONITORING

Community Science Institute Monitoring for Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs)

Harmful Algal Blooms are still occurring on Cayuga Lake. The Community Science Institute and its volunteers monitor Cayuga Lake for HABs each season. The most recent outbreaks can be seen on [this map](#)⁹, and more data on the reports throughout the season can be [seen here](#)¹⁰. THANK YOU CSI for all your work!

My apologies for writing in the last CWIO news that the DEC monitors for HABs in Cayuga Lake. CSI does the monitoring and then reports their findings to the DEC. A big thanks to the municipalities and donors who support this effort.

⁵ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1UUhkfS4t2KuDi7Rwfiob2VPxmSfv2CZk/view>

⁶ <http://www.cayugacounty.us/DocumentCenter/View/4889/Owasco-Lake-Watershed-Management-Plan?bidId=>

⁷ <http://www.cayugacounty.us/DocumentCenter/View/17172/Owasco-Lake-9E-Second-Public-Meeting-Powerpoint>

⁸ <http://www.cayugacounty.us/1244/Owasco-Watershed-Plan>

⁹ CSI Map of HABs <https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/o/viewer?mid=1p8OGols-3d8ANYvEgpiV6NgvdRNiz3DG&ll=42.72251874054697%2C-76.69514880468749&z=11>

¹⁰ https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/18G7Vw98RoC8CirL2_xZS-dm5NsKuUZK2_S46sdOGCs8/edit#gid=936873064

NEWS AND REPORTS

A Right to Clean Air and Water on the Ballot November 2

Along with 4 other important measures, a constitutional amendment is on the back of each ballot for the General Election on November 2. The amendment would add this sentence to the constitution, “Each person shall have a right to clean air and water, and a healthful environment”. Please use your communication networks to raise awareness of this important legislative action that can help us in the preservation of water quality in Cayuga Lake.

Challenge Launched to Salt Mine Permit Modification

The non-profit organization, Cayuga Lake Environmental Action Now (CLEAN), has mounted an article 78 lawsuit that challenges a mining permit modification issued by the DEC to Cargill in February 2021. The modification allows mining up to 1,000 feet of the Frontenac Point Anomaly, a geologic fault line located in the bedrock above the salt vein being mined about 2 miles north of Taughannock State Park. In the lawsuit, CLEAN argues that the setback should be 4 times as far, or at least 4,000 feet.

CLEAN argues that the much smaller map of the anomaly and the 1,000-foot setback put both Cargill’s miners and the lake at risk. Cargill has never done an Environmental Impact Assessment of the mine under Cayuga Lake, whereas American Rock Salt has already done two in their newer salt mine in Livingston County, NY. Both Seneca and Cayuga Lakes are more than twice as saline as they were before salt mining began at both lakes. CLEAN urges the DEC to better protect these lakes from on-going salinization and the risks of mine collapses.

Following an out-of-court settlement in March 2020, Cargill agreed to make ~\$10 million of upgrades to their surface operations at their Portland Point plant on Cayuga Lake. But the DEC continues to allow Cargill to discharge saline runoff water into the lake that is 160 times the EPA’s drinking water standard for chloride. [See more¹¹](#)

Recurring Cayuga Lake Harmful Algal Blooms Point to Emerging Patterns.

[This article¹²](#) in the Cornell Daily Sun looks at some of the trends scientists are seeing in harmful algal bloom outbreaks and possible reasons why.

Water Well Contractors and Reports Available Online

Basic well information and water well contractor [search tools](#) are available on DEC’s website. Search for a currently registered water well contractor by registration number, business name, or by the county that their office is in and the services provided.

Basic well information collected from over 125,000 Water Well Completion Reports is searchable by county, town, and street name or by using latitude and longitude and search radius. Information provided includes well depth, rock depth, groundwater depth, casing length, screen installation, and yield.

Water well data is also available as an Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc. (ESRI) shapefile from the NYS GIS Clearinghouse and in Google Earth format. Complete database extracts

¹¹ <https://cleancayugalake.org/>

¹² <https://cornellsun.com/2021/08/30/recurring-cayuga-lake-harmful-algal-blooms-point-to-emerging-ecological-patterns/>

and pdf reports are available by request from DEC's Central Office by submitting an [online FOIL request](#).

For more information about drilling water wells, see the DEC's [Consumer Protection Guide \(PDF\)](#)¹³.

RELATED WATER NEWS FROM OTHER REGIONS

Conservation Easements Protect Sensitive Lands

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has reached an impressive milestone: 5 million acres have been enrolled across all the conservation easement programs offered by NRCS over the past 28 years.

Farmers, ranchers, and private landowners who enroll their acres in conservation easements ensure protection of sensitive lands, support wildlife, and confront challenges like climate change.

Currently, NRCS offers conservation easements through the [Agricultural Conservation Easement Program](#)¹⁴ (ACEP), which helps landowners, land trusts, and other entities protect, restore, and enhance wetlands, grasslands, and working farms and ranches through conservation easements.

By the Numbers

- 5 Million acres enrolled in conservation easements
- 2.8 Million acres in wetland easements
- 1.9 million acres in agricultural easements, including grassland easements
- 110,000 acres enrolled in FY 2021
- 28 years of conservation easements.

Toxic Blooms in Skaneateles Lake Raise Urgency of Syracuse's Bid to Use Pesticide to Protect Its Drinking Water

[This article](#)¹⁵ discusses the recent proposal to treat HABs on Skaneateles Lake using an herbicide called Earthtec. It is a proposal that has received a lot of attention in recent weeks as residents of the lake raise their concerns about the safety of the chemical and the possibility of its interference with natural lake processes and lingering impacts on the ecosystem, which were notably led by the Skaneateles Lake Association (SLA). It will be an interesting issue to follow as the city of Syracuse (the city sources drinking water from Skaneateles Lake) searches for a way to address the risk HABs present to drinking water and we all seek solutions for how we can manage these blooms.

Seneca Lake Watershed: August Newsletter

A wealth of information is in the August Newsletter from the Seneca-Keuka Watershed Partnership. Of note is their public outreach meeting on their 9-Element Plan on October 7.

Articles include information about land preserved by the Finger Lakes Land Trust, lake monitoring updates, project updates from the Ontario, Schuyler, and Seneca County Soil and Water Conservation District and much more. [See the issue](#)¹⁶.

¹³ https://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/water_pdf/wwpbrochure15.pdf

¹⁴ https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/easements/acep/?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery

¹⁵ <https://waterfrontonline.blog/2021/09/20/toxic-blooms-in-skaneateles-lake-raise-urgency-of-syracuses-bid-to-use-pesticide-to-protect-its-drinking-water/>

¹⁶ https://senecawatershedio.files.wordpress.com/2021/09/skwp_newsletter_210927.pdf