



News **September 2022**

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Summary of the 8/24/22 CWIO Meeting and Recent Progress

The August CWIO meeting was held at Cayuga Lake State Park. Thanks to all who made the trek. It was great to see people in-person and off screen!

- **Watershed Manager:** CWIO is pleased to have hired Erin Norris as the new Watershed Manager. Erin began work on August 1 and has been delving into CWIO background and documents as well as introducing herself to key partners. She will be helping the Technical Advisory Committee advance projects and looking for options to collaborate with others.
- **Dues:** As municipal budgets are being set, please remember to set aside funds for CWIO dues which will be at 75% of the total voted on in 2021. Budget request letters will be sent out soon.
- **Letters of support:** CWIO authorized their Executive Committee to write letters of support for municipal grant proposals as long as the project aligns with the CWIO mission and purpose, the Cayuga Lake Restoration and Protection Plans, or the DEC’s Harmful Algal Bloom Action Plan. This will allow a more timely response to requests for support.

- CWIO Priorities:** CWIO discussed the outcome of the recent survey of CWIO priorities that were derived from the 2017 Restoration and Protection Plan (RPP). The following were rated the top five priority topics.

Agriculture	Address actions that will help reduce farm runoff and sediments from reaching waterways.
Ditches	Develop best management practices for municipal ditch systems to mitigate impacts from agriculture, high stormwater events, and salinization of the lake. Consider how tiling practices affect ditch water loads and how to mitigate. Offer training and education on this subject.
Land Use	Work with municipalities to understand the link between allowable land uses and water contamination. Develop materials for municipalities such as how and why to preserve critical environmental areas, importance of preserving farmlands and forests, wetlands protections, preserving vegetation along streams, protecting steep slopes, provide training and model policies/legislation.
Drinking water	Take actions to protect both surface and ground water including topics such as information on the impacts of development, recommend protective measures and best management practices, assist in plans that outline protective measures, help find funding for efforts that protect drinking water, and provide model polices and regulations.
Stormwater	Increase awareness of impacts of improperly managed stormwater and promote best management practices. For example: explore disconnecting downspouts, sediment and retention ponds, rain gardens, ditching practices, watershed-wide stormwater management strategies, and other measures that slows large stormwater events.
Wetlands	Provide outreach about the importance of preserving wetlands in relation to flooding, sedimentation, and water quality. Assist to map and inventory local wetlands to be more accurate than state and federal maps. Provide model polices/regulations/practices to improve protections of wetlands and riparian corridors/buffers.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES and FUNDED WORK

9/9/22 NYS Water Infrastructure Improvement Act (WIIA) and Intermunicipal Water Infrastructure Grants (IMG) Grants Available

The NYS Environmental Facilities Corporation (EFC) has \$225 million in grant funding available through the New York State Water Infrastructure Improvement Act (WIIA) and New York State Intermunicipal Water Infrastructure Grants (IMG) Program.

This funding is for municipalities with infrastructure projects that protect or improve public health and/or water quality. Eligible critical water infrastructure projects include those that combat emerging contaminants such as PFOA, PFOS, and 1,4 dioxane with system upgrades and innovative pilot technologies, along with those that address combined and/or sanitary sewer overflow impacts from sustained rain events.

Applications must be submitted using the Application Submission Form that can be found on EFC's [WIIA webpage](#) or IMG webpage by **5:00 p.m., Friday, September 9, 2022**.

Funding is Available for Building Code Administration and Enforcement Reimbursement After a Major Disaster Declaration

The DEC wants to pre-emptively remind local and tribal governments that the Disaster Recovery Reform Act of 2018 authorizes FEMA to reimburse communities for their work to administer and enforce building code and floodplain management ordinances following a major disaster declaration. [Review FEMA's informational flyer](#) (pdf) to learn more.

USDA Invests \$197 Million in Partner-Driven, Locally Led Conservation

USDA is awarding \$197 million for 41 locally led conservation projects through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). RCPP is a partner-driven program that leverages partner resources to advance innovative projects that address climate change, enhance water quality, and address other critical challenges on agricultural land. [Read more.](#)

USDA to Invest \$5 Million in the Wetland Mitigation Banking Program

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) today announced that it is investing up to \$5 million in the [Wetland Mitigation Banking Program \(WMBP\)](#). This grant program supports the development of mitigation banks for use by agricultural producers seeking to maintain eligibility for USDA programs. Funds are available to Tribes, state and local government entities, nonprofits, and other organizations. [Read more.](#)

Purchase of Land Easement to Protect Skaneateles Lake Water Quality

The DEC and Finger Lakes Land Trust (FLLT) announced the permanent protection of 234 acres at Casa Farms in the Town of Niles, Cayuga County, with a conservation easement. The funding came through a grant to the FLLT through the DEC's Water Quality Improvement Project (WQIP) program. The property features nearly 6,000 feet of frontage on Hooker Brook which drains directly into Skaneateles Lake, the unfiltered drinking water supply for more than 200,000 people in the City of Syracuse.

USDA Increases Funding for Partnerships to Safeguard, Restore Wetland Ecosystems

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is investing up to \$20 million in fiscal 2023 to help conservation partners protect and restore critical wetlands on agricultural lands through the Wetland Reserve Enhancement Partnership (WREP). USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is prioritizing proposals that support broader efforts to mitigate climate change by restoring wetlands. WREP is part of the [Agricultural Conservation Easement Program \(ACEP\)](#), which is a Farm Bill conservation program. Through WREP, states, local units of government, non-governmental organizations and American Indian tribes collaborate with NRCS through cooperative and partnership agreements. These partners work with tribal and private landowners who voluntarily enroll eligible land into easements to protect, restore and enhance wetlands on their properties. [See more here.](#)

In an Effort to Improve Water Quality, NYS to Revamp Wetlands at Woodlawn Beach.

New York State is beginning a \$1.6 million project to restore and increase wetlands at the Woodlawn Beach State Park in Blasdell, NY. [Read the story.](#)

The NYS DEC Awards \$255,240 to Reduce Localized Flooding and Improve Habitat

DEC has awarded \$255,240 in funding for two projects to develop regional municipal management plans and designs to improve inadequate road-stream crossings (culverts and bridges) at priority

sites for flood mitigation and/or stream habitat for fish. Funding for these projects is provided by the State's Environmental Protection Fund (EPF).

Ulster County was awarded \$125,464 to develop an interactive map and prioritization web tool to allow county and municipal decision-makers address current and future inadequate road-stream crossings. The map can be filtered to display each of the County's 24 municipalities. The project also will assess road-stream crossings in five municipalities in the Lower Esopus Watershed and will complete conceptual designs for eight priority crossings.

Trout Unlimited (TU) was awarded \$129,776 to identify priority road-stream crossing replacement projects that reconnect high-quality aquatic habitat and improve community flood resiliency and road infrastructure condition. The project will include the evaluation of road stream crossing survey data; an evaluation and prioritization of the results of the survey; and the development of conceptual and final designs for the highest priority aquatic barriers in each town. The survey results will be compiled into an inventory document and a web-based map resource for each town to further support future budgeting and planning efforts. [See the press release.](#)

TRAININGS and EDUCATION

9/28 1:30-3:00 - Dissolved Phosphorus and Green Infrastructure Fundamentals, Challenges, and Opportunities.

Reducing phosphorus pollution in aquatic ecosystems is a primary goal in many watersheds across the United States to mitigate eutrophication and harmful algal blooms. Several forms of green infrastructure can effectively reduce loads of total phosphorus to surface waters through the retention of particles and associated phosphorus.

This webinar will include examples of green infrastructure at multiple scales, including urban green stormwater infrastructure (e.g., bioretention and subsurface gravel wetlands) as well as larger ecosystem-scale systems (e.g., restored riparian wetlands).

Audience: Municipal decision makers, planners, and Department of Public Works (DPW) staff, environmental organizations, practitioners, educators, and interested citizens – anyone who is considering a new project or looking to build on an existing program.

Presenter: Eric Roy, PhD, Associate Professor at Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources & Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, University of Vermont.

[Register here.](#) [See more](#) about the EPA's Soak up the Rain series.

Dams and Culverts – Reconnecting Our Waterways

Dams & Culverts: Reconnecting Our Waterways is a [new video that shows how culverts and dams can impact flood risk and fish habitat](#). We can reconnect our rivers for fish and climate resilience.

Ways to do this include upgrading (or “rightsizing”) culverts and removing aging dams. Partners are supporting local communities to reconnect our rivers and streams.

To learn more:

- Earn Climate Smart Community Certification points by [taking action on Culverts & Dams](#)
- Visit DEC's webpage with [information for dam owners](#).
- Read about related assistance and funding programs at [Aquatic Connectivity and Barrier Removal: Restoring Free-Flowing Rivers in the Hudson River Watershed](#).
- Watch our other short videos on resilience actions [here](#).

Identifying and Reducing Flood Risk

Flooding remains the country's number one disaster and can potentially affect everyone and every property. [A new FEMA webpage](#) provides a comprehensive guide about how to protect yourself and your property from flooding. The webpage includes free resources to learn about the flood risk in your community and ways to reduce that risk. Resources linked on the webpage include the Flood Map Service Center, National Risk Index for Natural Hazards and the Flood Risk and Endangered Species Habitat Mapping Tool.

Lake Friendly Living Helps Communities Protect Water Quality

[A set of videos](#) provided by the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network in collaboration with other lake associations, helps landowners understand about practices that help protect the water. Videos include:

- The value of community-led water quality monitoring – Grascen Shidemantle at CSI
- Climate resiliency and what it means for the Finger Lakes – Frederick Stoss, Univ of Buffalo
- Nature-based shorelines for Lake Friendly Living – Alaina Robarge, Ontario County SWCD.
- Developing a community rain garden project – Kim Mills of Owasco Watershed Lake Assoc.
- Connecting land & people: Seneca County SWCD's local projects – Erin Peruzzini, Seneca SWCD.
- NY Climate Smart Communities: Opportunities & lessons learned – Amanda Mazzoni, CNYRPDB

9/14/22 1:00-2:30 - Wetlands and Watercourse Protection: Lessons from Hudson Valley Towns and an Update on Changes to NYS Wetland Policy

This webinar takes an in-depth look at local wetland and watercourse regulations. These policies are a powerful tool to protect natural resources and reduce flood risk, filling major gaps in federal and state regulations by protecting a wider range of wetlands, watercourses, and critical buffer areas.

Municipal planning and zoning boards are eligible for 1.5 hours of training credit. [Click here to register](#)

Creating Conservation Overlays

This information on Conservation Overlays originates in the Hudson Valley, but the same process is applicable in the Finger Lakes. Learn how to protect sensitive environmental areas such as stream corridors, steep slopes, wetlands and critical habitat through the use of Conservation Overlays.

[Explore the guide and tools](#)

RESEARCH and RESOURCES

A Program to Understand and Mitigate Nutrient Supply and Harmful Algal Blooms in Skaneateles Lake.

[Listen to this presentation](#) by Dr. Charles T. Driscoll, Professor at Syracuse University (starting at minute 53)

9/7/22 8:30-5:30 Understanding Algal Blooms – The State of Science

Research and outreach leaders will present findings from recent studies and identify important areas of uncertainty. Specific topics will include:

- Nutrients and processes behind algal blooms
- New tools to track and predict algal blooms

- Latest progress from Ohio agencies managing water quality and algal blooms
- Impacts of manure and stream processes on nutrient loads

[A registration link and more details](#) about the event being held both on-line and in person in Toledo, Ohio can be found on Ohio Sea Grant's website.

Resources Available on Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB) Research and Human Health Risks.

This spring, the Great Lakes HABs Collaborative published two factsheets on human health effects of harmful algal blooms, covering chronic long-term effects and exposure to HAB toxins through aerosolization. [View all the HABs Collaborative's factsheets and publications.](#)

Additionally, the HABs Collaborative, with the support of the GLC, developed the [HABs Research Mapper](#). This app will help the Great Lakes research community to collaborate by sharing information on their work and directing the water management community to research projects of interest around the Great Lakes basin.

Microplastics: A Growing Concern

Read more about the [growing concern over microplastics in water](#). While this story is from the Great Lakes, the problem is a concern throughout many watersheds.

Newest Data on 'Forever Chemicals' Has Leaders Exploring Testing and Treatment Options for Drinking Water.

While this article is not local to the Finger Lakes, the issue of “forever chemicals” is relevant:

Five million people in Illinois live near water systems that utilize Lake Michigan water, which is reported to have “worrisome concentrations” of PFAS, according to a database of Illinois PFAS water testing created by the *Chicago Tribune*. Local leaders in Illinois have said they were aware of the latest research regarding PFAS are awaiting new guidance from the EPA. [Read the full story.](#)

MONITORING

HABs Updates for Cayuga Lake

The Cayuga Lake Watershed Network in coordination with the Community Science Institute (CSI) provide season long HABs monitoring and reporting. [See current and past reports.](#)

The Community Science Institute Updates on Cayuga Lake

The Community Science Institute (CSI) monitors much of Cayuga Lake and tracks a wide variety of data available for all to see and analyze. [See their regular bulletins](#) on the current and past status of Cayuga Lake.

NEWS AND REPORTS

Cayuga County and Owasco Watershed:

Watershed Inspection Helps Protect Owasco Lake

The OLWIPD makes regular and thorough inspections of Owasco Lake, its watercourses, and its watershed to ascertain compliance with the [Owasco Lake Watershed Rules and Regulations \(WRR\)](#) and provides educational outreach to the watershed community to foster

lake stewardship. This local mandate, according to New York State Public Health Law, permits Watershed Inspectors to access and inspect any area within the watershed to guide corrective actions and land use activities where necessary.

The Division's two Watershed Inspectors have a lot of ground to cover throughout the 208 square mile watershed and along 25 miles of shoreline. The OLWIPD commonly receives questions from the public inquiring about the condition of the lake and how they, as individuals, can become better stewards. These conversations demonstrate that both the OLWIPD and watershed residents share the same goal: to ensure that the quality of our water is held to the highest standard. The OLWIPD, while acting as an enforcement body, additionally strives to provide the community with the knowledge and tools needed to adopt land use practices that target limiting the mobility of sediment and nutrients, pollutants that have adverse impacts on water quality. The OLWIPD frequently partners with the NYS DEC, as well as the Departments of Health and Soil and Water Conservation Districts for Cayuga, Tompkins, and Onondaga Counties. Overall, collectively respond and act to ensure drinking water remains protected. Voluntary efforts such as the deployment of sediment and erosion control during construction, the implementation of Best Management Practices on farms such as cover cropping and reduced tillage, properly stabilizing a forest trail, and upgrading outdated or failing septic systems are measures which can be taken to protect and improve water quality.

Watershed Inspectors provide a friendly outlet for discussion, planning and support to address current and future operations that may impact water quality. Owasco Lake watershed residents can have questions or concerns answered. By the watershed inspectors: Ally Berry, Lead Watershed Inspector, Phone: 315-427-5188, alberry@owascoinspection.com or Jillian Aluisio, Watershed Inspector, Phone: 315-209-9840, jcaluisio@owascoinspection.com

Owasco Camp Installs a Nutrient-Treating Septic System

The Cayuga County Health Department and The Nature Conservancy have partnered to bring the first phosphorous reduction septic system to the Owasco Lake shoreline. The system was installed in early June at the Auburn YMCA-WEIU's Camp Y-Owasco and designed by a team at the Cayuga County Soil and Water Conservation District with consultation from Coastal Wastewater Solutions, a consultant to The Nature Conservancy, and the Cayuga County Health Department.

Unlike conventional septic systems which may reduce about 6% of phosphorous before effluent flows to the leach field, the new system is expected to remove 90% or more of the nutrients coming from the primary bathhouse at the Y Camp before reaching the new leach field.

The next phase of the project aims to install similar systems at residential sites along the lakeshore, utilizing the NYS Septic System Replacement Program (SSRP) which provides a 50% cost share of up to \$10,000 for the replacement of a septic system along Owasco, Cayuga, and Skaneateles Lakes in Cayuga County.

To learn more about the SSRP funds or about participating in the residential phase of the project, please contact the Cayuga County Health Department cchealth@cayugacounty.us or 315-253-1405.

Cayuga Lake Watershed:

CLWN Accepting Applications for a Program Associate

The Cayuga Lake Watershed Network (CLWN) is accepting applications for a Program Associate. The Program Associate has a central role in carrying out the CLWN community-based programs and organizational development. This is a full-time salaried position with benefits, flexible hours, and a combination of in-person and remote work. The position description and application instructions can be viewed at www.cayugalake.org.

Tompkins County: Funds Available for Septic System Upgrades

Septic Systems For Low-Income Properties:

Tompkins County recently received funds from NYS for replacing Septic Systems. The funds from this grant will be used for the upgrade of substandard septic systems for single-family, owner-occupied properties located within the boundaries of Tompkins County, but outside of the City of Ithaca.

Occupants must be low-to-moderate in income, as per the table below, and the property's septic system must be in need of repair or replacement. Other requirements apply.

Household Size (Number of Persons/Maximum Income)							
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
\$56,150	\$64,150	\$72,150	\$80,150	\$86,600	\$93,000	\$99,400	\$105,800

Contact Thoma Development Consultants at 607-753-1433, Monday-Friday, between 8:30am-4:00pm. For more information, visit <https://www.tompkinscountyny.gov/health/eh/owts/tcsup>.

Septic System Replacement for Cayuga Lake Properties

Owners of eligible properties situated on or in close proximity to Cayuga Lake may be reimbursed for the replacement of failing or inadequate sewage systems. The Clean Water Infrastructure Act of 2017 established the "State Septic System Replacement Fund", a multi-year program allocating money to communities along impaired waterbodies for the replacement or repair of poorly functioning sewage systems.

Upon approval by the Tompkins County Health Department, eligible property owners can be reimbursed up to 50% of costs for sewage system projects up to \$10,000.

Eligibility criteria now include seasonal and second homes. Funds can be awarded to repair or replace existing sewage systems that:

- Are in failure or are reasonably likely to fail.
- Are within 250 feet of Cayuga Lake or are determined to have a reasonable potential to adversely impact Cayuga Lake.
- Serve a single parcel of land.
- Serve residences or small businesses only (can be seasonal or secondary homes).

For information on how to apply, contact the Tompkins County Health Department [here](#) or call (607) 274-6600.

Seneca and Keuka Watershed

Seneca-Keuka Watershed Partnership

The summer edition of the [Seneca and Keuka Watershed news](#) is a joint effort and an excellent example of effective collaborative work. Articles included:

- Watershed Planning
- Lake Monitoring and Research,
- Water Treatment to reduce phosphorus
- Highlights and progress from the Soil and Water Conservation District Offices
- Update on the Seneca Lake 9 Element Plan
- New York Wine & Grape Foundation Sustainability Pilot Program Update
- Focus article on different municipalities and their role in protecting the water quality of the Seneca-Keuka Watershed.

Skaneateles Watershed

Skaneateles Lake Watershed Takes Steps to Complete a Nine Element Plan

The Skaneateles Lake Association (SLA), the Town of Skaneateles, Onondaga County, the City of Syracuse, NYS, Central NY Regional Planning and Development Board, and other watershed stakeholders had public discussions to further the development of a Nine Element (9E) Plan for the lake.

A Nine-Element Watershed Management Plan identifies water concerns such as HABs, nutrient loading, and other issues and outlines strategies to address them.

[View a recording of the meeting.](#)

NY DEC and Ag & Market Commissioners Work with Farmers to Ensure Climate Resiliency for the Future. America's farmers have long pioneered conservation measures in response to environmental challenges. Now farmers are on the frontlines in our battle against the climate crisis. New York State is at the forefront of giving the agricultural industry and the State's farmers, like Greenfield Farms, the tools they need in our shared fight against climate change.

Working with the State, County Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Cornell Cooperative Extension, USDA-NRCS and non-profit partners, they are deploying the latest agricultural strategies, sustainable practices, critical soil and water conservation efforts, and carbon reduction strategies designed to improve the health and resiliency of the State's farms, ecosystems, and communities.

[Read the full op-ed of this inspiring story.](#)

Reduce Hazardous Waste Going into Water Bodies: Post-Consumer Paint Collection and Other Hazardous Waste Disposal Programs.

The New York State [Post-consumer Paint Collection Program](#) took effect May 1, 2022. As of May 1, 2022, a producer or retailer shall not sell, or offer for sale, architectural paint to any person in the state unless the producer and the producer's brands are participating in the program by having registered as a drop off location with [PaintCare](#). Other hazardous waste disposal program information is available as follows:

- Waste tires can be brought to a tire services center under the [Waste Tire and Recycling Fund](#).

- The Lead-acid battery recycling law requires retailers and distributors who sell lead-acid batteries to accept used batteries from customers.
- Prescription drugs can be accepted by any NYS [medication drop-off box locations](#)
- Individuals can return up to 5 gallon/day of [used oil](#) at qualifying businesses at no charge.
- For more recycling alternatives, visit [Recycle Right New York](#).

New State Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (SPDES) Issues New General Permit for CAFOs

The DEC has issued the final [SPDES General Permit](#) for Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs)

This permit will be effective on **January 23, 2023** replacing the previous permit, GP-0-16-001, and includes additional climate change considerations, updated references to Cornell's most recent nutrient and manure application guidelines, and enhanced oversight conditions.

See the [final permit, fact sheet, and responsiveness summary](#) on the DEC's CAFO webpage.