



Cayuga Lake Watershed Intermunicipal Organization (CWIO)

Intermunicipal cooperation to protect the watershed.

RECOMMENDED STATE ACTIONS TO SUPPORT WATER QUALITY PROTECTION

Finalization of the TMDL for Cayuga Lake:

The Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for Cayuga Lake is intended to outline actions that need to be taken to reduce phosphorus in the lake. Phosphorus is a known contributor to Harmful Algal Blooms and other water quality issues. The state has been working on the TMDL for nearly a decade. Having a final document will help direct our collective work within the watershed and improve access to funding to implement projects. Its absence slows implementation of projects that benefit water quality. **CWIO requests finalization of the TMDL for Cayuga Lake.**

Fund Implementation of State Water Quality Plans and Objectives Through Direct Support of Watershed Management Organizations and Soil & Water Conservation Districts:

New York invested in the development of watershed management plans for many of its larger water bodies including Cayuga Lake. There is an ongoing need for coordination to implement actions spelled out in these watershed plans. Watershed Managers and Stewards provide this coordination working directly with local governments on projects that achieve the goals of state plans, but the state has not maintained a commitment to implement these watershed plans. Counties and local governments—some with annual budgets under \$300,000—pay for these Watershed Managers and Stewards. **CWIO requests that the state join with local governments in contributing a share of the annual funding that pays for these staff who work on behalf of all levels of government—including New York State.**

Both state and local governments rely on Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) offices to implement state-approved plans. SWCDs play a vital role in protecting valuable resources by providing technical experts who partner with CWIO and others to understand problems and find solutions to water quality issues. This is especially important for smaller municipalities with no staff and small budgets. SWCDs are one of the few agencies that can provide direct support to private landowners and farming operations. They work to reduce certain pollutants from running off farmlands while also supporting this critical sector of the state's economy. With CWIO's regional perspective, we see a wide variability in SWCD staffing and funding. In many counties, there simply are not enough staff to manage the

workloads and apply for grant funding to implement projects that are outlined in water quality plans. **CWIO requests the state ensure proper staffing of the SWCD offices that landowners and municipalities rely on to understand and implement actions that protect water quality.**

Consider Changes in State Grant Funding to Encourage More Local Participation

New York State has numerous grant programs aimed at protecting water quality and CWIO is incredibly grateful for this commitment. CWIO has however observed some barriers, especially for grant applicants such as municipalities, non-governmental organizations, and organizations with small budgets and limited staff. The actions below would accelerate participation among these sectors resulting in completion of more projects that positively affect water quality. **CWIO recommends the state:**

- Reduce the applicant grant matches to enable entities with small budgets to apply.
- Allow a bigger percentage of grant funding to be used to pay for personnel who are implementing the project such as consultants, grant administrators, and water quality professionals.
- Either shorten the time period between grant work accomplished and when reimbursements are received from the state or pay some of the grant funding in advance to be used as a share of the working capital such as is done with the Great Lakes Commission's Nutrient and Sediment Reduction grant program which allows 10-15% of advance funding. This would increase equity for low-income communities that do not have adequate reserves to cover project costs in advance of reimbursements.