



CWIO News **October 2023**

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FROM THE CHAIR

Interviews are underway for a new CWIO Watershed Manager and there are some excellent candidates. Wishing we could hire more than one person! Thanks to CWIO representatives and partners from throughout the watershed for taking time to help with the interviews. A special thanks to Lisa Cleckner from the Finger Lakes Institute (FLI) for once again agreeing to house the Cayuga Watershed Manager at FLI. We should have a decision to announce by the October 25 CWIO meeting.

CWIO MEETING SUMMARY

Rural Communities Assistance Partnership (RCAP): Becky Sims from RCAP gave a thorough overview of steps that can be expected with some of the state and federal pots of funding. These larger funding amounts are not easy to get and the process takes real persistence but in the end can save your taxpayers a lot of money. RCAP can help in many ways. [See a summary of Becky’s presentation](#) or contact her at bsims@rcapsolutions.org

Owasco Watershed Rules and Regulations: The WRRs for Owasco came back from the state with many important aspects of their updated WRRs removed—essentially making the new WRRs less protective than the ones they are operating under now. CWIO discussed what that means for the Cayuga Lake watershed that has no WRR. We were hoping for a good outcome on Owasco before launching into similar work on Cayuga.

Salt Mine concerns and a request for action: CWIO Representatives approved a resolution that outlines concerns over the stability of the rock over the Cayuga Salt mine owned by Cargill. Cargill contracts with the state which allows mining directly under Cayuga Lake. The mine has never undergone a state environmental review and Cargill is now interested in selling the mine. CWIO is requesting an environmental review as other mines have been required to undergo to better understand the risks of the salt mine becoming connected to the lake. [See the full resolution.](#)

Environmental Bond funding suggestions: NYS requested ideas for how to spend the Clean Water, Clean Air, and Green Jobs Environmental Bond. [See CWIO's suggestions here.](#)

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES, FUNDED WORK, and ASSISTANCE

10/11/23: DEC Announces Round 2 of the Community Forest Conservation Grant Program

DEC is excited to announce Round 2 of the Community Forest Conservation Grant! This grant opportunity aims to provide municipalities with financial assistance in purchasing forest land for the purpose of creating community forests. Community forests can provide many benefits, such as:

- Supporting fish and wildlife habitat;
- Mitigating flood risks;
- Providing recreational opportunities;
- Boosting mental health;
- Improving air and water quality; and
- Enhancing resiliency to climate change.

Applications are due by October 11th, 2022. For more information, [visit the Community Forest Conservation Grant webpage.](#)

10/12/23--Grant Opportunity- North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) Grants: Small Grants Program

The [Small Grants Program](#), run through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), is a competitive matching grants program that supports public-private partnerships carrying out projects in the United States that further the goals of the [North American Wetlands Conservation Act](#). These projects must involve long-term protection, restoration, and/or enhancement of wetlands and associated uplands habitats for the benefit of all wetlands-associated migratory birds. Wetlands can play a strong role in improving water quality by trapping sediment from runoff and remove nutrients. Additionally coastal wetlands can assist with adaptation to climate change by stabilizing shorelines and provide water filtration and habitat for fish and other wildlife.

Deadline to apply: October 12, 2023.

For more information on how to apply, eligibility, and proposal outlines, visit the NAWCA Small Grants Program webpage [here](#).

11/1--\$3 Million in Grants Available for Invasive Species Projects

\$3 million is now available in the third round of the [New York State Invasive Species Grant Program](#). This grant program, supported by the State Environmental Protection Fund, is designed to advance projects that target aquatic and terrestrial invasive species across the state. There are six funding categories that address: invasive species spread prevention; early detection and rapid response; research; management planning; and education and outreach.

Submit applications by **November 1, 2023**. [Visit DEC's Invasive Species Grant Program webpage for more information.](#)

11/3 --Announcing Funding For CSP, EQIP, AMA, ACEP Programs

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) New York announces **Friday, November 3**, as the first batching date for applications submitted for Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 funding through the [Conservation Stewardship Program \(CSP\)](#), the [Environmental Quality Incentives Program \(EQIP\)](#), EQIP Initiatives including the [Great Lakes Restoration Initiative \(GLRI\)](#), [National Water Quality Initiative](#), and [Agricultural Management Assistance \(AMA\)](#).

November 29, 2023, and February 9, 2024, are batching dates for Fiscal Year 2024 funding through the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program – Agricultural Land Easement (ALE) and Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE). Applications received after November 29, will be batched with applications received by the February 9, 2024, deadline. For more information, please click the links below, or contact your local [service center](#).

[CSP/EQIP/AMA news release](#) [ACEP news release](#)

11/6/23 - Drinking Water System Infrastructure Resilience and Sustainability Grant Program Request for Applications (RFA)

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has announced the opening of the Drinking Water System Infrastructure Resilience and Sustainability Grant Program. The grant program aims to provide funding to assist public water systems in underserved communities that are disadvantaged communities or communities with a population of less than 10,000 individuals for the purpose of increasing drinking water system resilience to natural hazards. \$19 million in federal funding is available to eligible groups under the FY23 announcement of this grant program.

Application Deadline: November 6, 2023 @ 11:59pm ET

View the RFA [HERE](#). View the Grant website [HERE](#). View the Grant factsheet [HERE](#).

11/17--Transformational Habitat Restoration and Coastal Resilience Grants

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has announced that \$240 million is available for habitat restoration and coastal resilience projects under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and Inflation Reduction Act. The grants will support efforts such as reconnecting rivers to their historic floodplains, and building living shorelines that protect coasts from erosion and sea-level rise. Submit applications by **November 17, 2023**. [Find more information, including how to apply and scheduled webinars on NOAA's website.](#)

11/14/23--Municipal Options for Financing Open Space Protection

Many municipalities are interested in protecting forests, farms, streams, and other open spaces that are important to their residents. [Open space planning](#) is an important step for a community to identify priorities and assess a range of potential policies to achieve conservation goals. Evaluating financing options to protect priority lands and waters is a next step to establish a municipal land protection fund.

In this interactive forum, municipal leaders will share case studies on developing and implementing local open space finance policies. Speakers will share experiences with building community support, lessons learned, and how funds have been used to achieve conservation of local priorities.

Tuesday, November 14, 2:00-5:00 pm. [Click here to register via Webex.](#)

This event is HYBRID. Please indicate in the registration form whether you will attend in person or virtually via Webex. The hybrid portion of the program will last approximately 2 hours. *Hybrid program offered by the Hudson River Estuary Program and Scenic Hudson*

11/17/23--Biden-Harris Administration Announces Availability of \$20 Million in Grants to Create Career Opportunities in the Water Workforce

On September 25 the U.S. EPA announced the availability of over \$20 million in grant funding to support training for workers who protect and treat our nation's drinking water and provide critical wastewater services. Through the Innovative Water Infrastructure Workforce Development Grant program, EPA will

support training and career opportunities in the water sector. With the Biden-Harris Administration's historic investment in water infrastructure, growing and sustaining the water sector workforce is more important than ever for ensuring clean and safe water for generations to come. [See the full announcement¹](#). Applications must be received by EPA by November 17, 2023. [Learn more about the Innovative Water Infrastructure Workforce Development Grant program](#).

Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) and Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) Draft Intended Use Plans for Federal Fiscal Year 2024

The New York State Environmental Facilities Corporation (EFC) and DEC and DOH have announced the availability of the Draft Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2024 Intended Use Plan (IUP) for the CWSRF and DWSRF. The programs are available to municipalities and certain non-municipal entities in New York State to finance water quality related projects. The Draft IUP includes lists of projects that could receive funding in FFY 2024, which is October 1, 2023 to September 30, 2024. [View the draft CWSRF FFY 2024 IUP](#) and the [draft DWSRF FFY 2024 IUP](#) on EFC's website.

\$7.5 Billion in Available Financing for Water Infrastructure Projects

The EPA recently announced \$7.5 billion in available Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) funding. This innovative low-interest loan program helps communities invest in drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure while saving millions of dollars and creating good-paying local jobs. To date, EPA's WIFIA program has announced \$19 billion to help finance 109 projects across the country. These projects are creating over 60,000 jobs. [The announcement](#) furthers the Biden-Harris Administration's commitment to ensuring all people and all communities have access to clean and safe water.

EPA Awards Nearly \$8M for Research Grants to Advance Groundwater Availability and Quality

On September 21, the EPA announced \$7,837,196 in funding to four institutions to research the use and risks of enhanced aquifer recharge (EAR) to improve groundwater availability and quality.

EAR is the practice of using water sources to replenish and supplement existing groundwater supplies for storage, potential reuse, and to restore streamflow. While EAR implementation and management has been an active topic of research for many years, significant knowledge gaps remain concerning best practices in the design, siting, performance (hydrologic and water quality), longevity, maintenance, and monitoring of EAR in different land use and hydrogeologic settings. Other terms that are used interchangeably with EAR include managed aquifer recharge, artificial recharge, and aquifer storage and recovery. [Read the press release](#).

Funding for Agricultural Projects to Enhance Water Quality

[Governor Kathy Hochul has announced over \\$13.8 million has been awarded to 33 projects across New York](#) through the State's Agricultural Nonpoint Source Abatement and Control Program. The funding supports agricultural water quality conservation projects, which will benefit 80 farms, enhance water quality in priority watersheds, and protect the environment.

The 33 projects awarded to 22 county Soil and Water Conservation Districts will support on-farm environmental planning and implementation of best management practice systems, including installing vegetative buffers along streams, planting cover crops, enhancing nutrient management through manure storage and other conservation measures.

[Find the complete list of projects awarded \(PDF\)](#) on the Department of Agriculture and Markets' website.

¹ [https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/biden-harris-administration-announces-availability-20-million-grants-create-career#:~:text=WASHINGTON%20\(September%2025%2C%202023\),and%20provide%20critical%20wastewater%20services](https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/biden-harris-administration-announces-availability-20-million-grants-create-career#:~:text=WASHINGTON%20(September%2025%2C%202023),and%20provide%20critical%20wastewater%20services).

Water Quality Management Planning Grant Awards

DEC has awarded five-year grants to 11 baseline planning programs and 1 statewide coordination program under the [2023 Clean Water Act Section 604\(b\) Water Quality Management Planning Grant program](#). Eligible applicants were regional public comprehensive planning organizations and interstate organizations. Annual award amounts are based on Congressional appropriations. Awardees of the baseline grant will provide assistance toward at least one of the following objectives:

- Nine Element Watershed Management Plan development and implementation.
- Drinking Water Source Protection Program development and implementation.
- Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) general permit assistance.
- Local, regional and watershed planning.
- Targeted surface water monitoring to support statewide water quality reporting or specific planning or implementation initiative.

Central New York Regional Planning and Development Board received the one statewide coordination program grant. The 2023 - 2028 awardees for baseline programs that cover the Cayuga watershed are:

- Central New York Regional Planning and Development Board (Cayuga Co) \$98,237
- Genesee/Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council (Seneca, Ontario) \$97,769
- Southern Tier Central Regional Planning and Development Board (Schuyler) \$97,770
- Southern Tier 8 Regional Planning Development Board (Tompkins, Cortland, Tioga) \$64,307

TRAINING, RESOURCES, and WATERSHED PLANNING

10/25/23 information. 11/4-deadline for applications--NYSDEC's Drinking Water Source Protection Program (DWSP₂) Offers Opportunities to Protect Drinking Source Waters

New York State's Drinking Water Source Protection Program (DWSP₂) is a locally led, state-supported program that empowers municipalities to take action to improve and protect their public water sources and surrounding environment. Communities accepted into the program are provided free technical assistance to develop their own unique DWSP₂ plan, leading to steps the municipality can take to protect their drinking water sources now and into the future.

Learn about this opportunity, including how to apply, by attending this virtual information session. [Click here to register](#) for the Information Session.

The deadline to apply for assistance is **Tuesday, November 4**, at 4:00 pm.

For more information, visit the [Drinking Water Source Protection Program](#) page on the DEC website or contact source.water@dec.ny.gov.

11/2 and 11/8--The SEQR Process and Habitat Conservation

November 2, 5:30-8:30 pm, DEC Stony Kill Farm Environmental Education Center, Wappingers Falls, NY. [Register via SurveyMonkey](#).

November 8, 5:30-8:30 pm, DEC Five Rivers Environmental Education Center, Delmar, NY [Register via SurveyMonkey](#).

In New York, State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR) requires all state and local government agencies to equally examine environmental impacts along with social and economic considerations during discretionary decision-making, including the review of proposed development projects. The SEQR process provides an important opportunity for local decision-makers to identify and avoid, minimize, or mitigate potential impacts to valuable natural areas.

This training will introduce the SEQR process, lead agency responsibilities, and local authority to conserve the environment. It will focus especially on questions in Parts 1 and 2 of the Environmental Assessment Forms relating to habitats and biodiversity and include an interactive exercise. Participants will learn about questions

to ask during environmental reviews and sources of information to support a thorough consideration of habitats and biodiversity in SEQR.

Speakers: Bonnie Franson, AICP Certified Environmental Planner (CEP), Nelson Pope Voorhis Emily Svenson, Esq., Gordon and Svenson LLP. Certificates of attendance will be available for those seeking municipal training credit. Training hours: 2.5. Light dinner will be offered 5:30-6:00pm. The formal program will begin at 6:00pm.

Updated Great Lakes Action Agenda

DEC [has released an updated New York's Great Lakes Action Agenda \(GLAA\)](#) 2023, a strategic, ecosystem-based action plan to guide restoration and conservation and foster sustainable, resilient communities in New York's Great Lakes region. The GLAA advances efforts to safeguard water quality, improve habitats for fish and wildlife, manage invasive species, promote sustainability, and enhance community resilience to climate change. The region spans more than 40 percent of New York State's land area and includes Lake Erie, the Niagara River, Lake Ontario, the St. Lawrence River, and contributing watersheds.

The release of the updated GLAA coincides with the development of the fourth federal action plan for the [Great Lakes Restoration Initiative \(GLRI\)](#), which will guide federal restoration and protection investments in the region through 2029. Since 2010, nearly \$270 million in GLRI funding has been secured for Great Lakes projects in New York State.

[View the updated GLAA](#)². Learn more and get involved: email greatlakes@dec.ny.gov.

Protecting Wetlands and Streams in Your Community

Protecting wetlands and streams is vital to safeguarding water resources, but gaps in federal and state regulations leave many wetlands and streams vulnerable to degradation and loss. The Supreme Court's recent Sackett ruling significantly rolled back federal protection for wetlands and streams. New York State is meanwhile set to expand some protection for wetlands, but major gaps remain, especially for smaller wetlands, seasonal streams, and adjacent buffers around these sensitive water resources.

Wednesday, October 18, 6:00-7:30 pm (virtual) - [register via Zoom](#), offered in partnership with Rockland County, Orange County, and Sullivan County Planning Departments

Monday, October 23, 6:30-8:00 pm (virtual) - *registration forthcoming*, offered in partnership with Dutchess County Planning Federation and Ulster County Planning Department

Monday, October 30, 6:00-7:30 pm (in-person) - [register via Survey Monkey](#) - in partnership with Columbia County Planning Department

Thursday, November 9, 1:00-2:30 pm (virtual) - [register via Webex](#)

This program will cover:

- the importance and functions of wetlands and streams in the Hudson Valley;
- status and changes to federal and state wetlands and stream regulations; and
- ways local government can provide more comprehensive protection for these key water resources.

Speakers: Emily Svenson, Gordon & Svenson LLP, Ingrid Haeckel and Christine Vanderlan, Hudson River Estuary Program and Cornell University. *Webinars and in-person seminars offered by the Hudson River Estuary Program*

EPA's Watershed Academy Offers Two Training Modules.

Nutrient Pollution

The new Nutrient Pollution Module module provides an overview of nutrient pollution and the associated water quality and human health impacts. This module covers the science behind the nutrients nitrogen and phosphorus, the impacts of nutrient pollution on human health and the environment, the sources of nutrient pollution, and federal, state, tribal, and territory actions

² <https://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/91881.html>

underway to mitigate nutrient pollution impacts. It also includes the current science on how climate change may impact nutrient pollution. Finally, the module covers the tools, opportunities, and activities available for the public to get involved in these issues. This module is eligible for the Watershed Management Training Certificate program. [Begin the course](#)³.

Addressing Nonpoint Source Pollution

The EPA's Watershed Academy webcast, "[Addressing Nonpoint Source Pollution](#)" held in July 2023 is now available

Previous Watershed Academy webcasts are also available for viewing [here](#)⁴.

10/26/23--Overview of NY's Freshwater Wetland Regulatory Changes

In 2022, historic revisions to New York's Freshwater Wetlands Act were signed into law. Currently, the DEC jurisdiction is limited to wetlands that are equal to or greater than 12.4 acres (and certain wetlands of unusual local importance) and identified on the State Freshwater Wetlands Map. The new legislation will eliminate the map requirement beginning in 2025, and in 2028 DEC's jurisdiction will expand to wetlands as small as 7.4 acres. The reforms will allow DEC to protect over one million acres of critically important freshwater wetlands that are currently unmapped and thousands of additional acres of smaller wetlands.

This webinar will provide an overview of DEC's current freshwater wetlands regulations and how they are enforced. It will explain the need for the regulatory revisions and outline the forthcoming regulatory changes and their effective dates.

Speaker: Krista Spohr, Environmental Program Specialist, DEC Bureau of Ecosystem Health

Register via Webex for webinar on **Thursday, October 26, 1:00-2:15 p.m.**

Webinar offered by the Hudson River Estuary Program

Protecting New York's Freshwater Wetlands - Roy (JR) Jacobson, Head of DEC Habitat Protection

At the July CWIO meeting the Head of the DEC Habitat Protection Division, Roy (JR) Jacobson, gave an inspiring update on NYS legislation to protect wetlands. There are plenty of (good) changes on their way. [See the slides from JR's presentation](#)⁵.

MONITORING and RESEARCH

Hydrilla found along Sheldrake/Wyers Point: Treatment, monitoring, and outreach for 2023

Our partner organization, the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network (CLWN) works with the NYS DEC to monitor and plan for treatment of hydrilla. [See the article](#)⁶.

Weekly HABs Update from the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network (CLWN)

[See the CLWN weekly Harmful Algal Bloom \(HAB\) updates](#) to track the current status of HABs, understand important background information, and identify ways to become involved with this important issue.

Scientists are learning just how complicated it will be to reduce toxic blooms in Lake Erie

For two decades, scientists have been studying toxic cyanobacterial blooms in the western basin of Lake Erie. All those data reveal that it's an incredibly complex situation that's constantly changing and there are no easy solutions. [Read more](#).

³ Visit <https://www.epa.gov/watershedacademy/nutrient-pollution-module>

⁴ <https://www.epa.gov/watershedacademy/watershed-academy-webcast-archives>

⁵ https://cwio.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Jacobson_CWIO_ForDistribution_26July2023.pdf

⁶ <https://www.cayugalake.org/wp-content/uploads/2023-i1-2-CLWN-NN-WEB.pdf>

Meteorological and Limnological Precursors to Cyanobacterial Blooms in Seneca and Owasco Lakes, New York, USA

Meteorological and water quality data were collected in offshore and nearshore settings over 4 years in the oligotrophic–mesotrophic Owasco and Seneca Lakes in order to assess cyanobacteria bloom (CyanoHABs) spatial and temporal variability and precursor meteorological and water quality conditions. [See the research?](#)

Harmful Algal Bloom Press release – Cayuga County

[See the press release from Cayuga County Department of Health](#)

Current estimates of Lake Erie algae toxicity may miss the mark; Study suggests harmful algal bloom toxicity varies over the summer

A new study analyzing toxins produced by Microcystis, the main type of cyanobacteria that compose the annual harmful algal bloom (HAB) in Lake Erie, suggests that the toxicity of the bloom may be overestimated in earlier warm months and underestimated later in the summer. [Read the full story by The Beacon.](#)

MUNICIPAL PROJECTS

Town of Scipio Ditch Remediation

Ditch remediation efforts have continued all summer and the project on Ensenor Road, Scipio is completed. Consisting of dams, culverts, and stone to slow and settle field and road runoff before it goes into Owasco Lake, the project shows cooperation among the Town of Scipio, Owasco Watershed Lake Association (OWLA), Cayuga County Soil and Water Conservation District, and the State of New York. OWLA volunteers secured grant funding to provide the 25% local contribution. (note: Scipio is also in the Cayuga Watershed. Kudos Scipio!!)

Cayuga Lake Watershed Grants Awarded through AEM

Round 29 Agricultural Nonpoint Source Abatement and Control Program Project Descriptions All projects support the New York State Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) Program by funding the implementation of agricultural Best Management Practices (BMPs) to protect natural resources while maintaining the economic viability of New York State’s diverse agricultural community

\$310,947 was awarded to the **Cayuga County Soil and Water Conservation District** to work with one farm in the Cayuga Lake Watershed. This project will:

- Promote optimal nutrient uptake and retention of manure nutrients and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from road traffic
- Encourage efficient wash water management to reduce access water entering the waste storage
- Establish a 1.3-acre stream buffer to further reduce nutrient runoff into nearby waterways, increase biodiversity and habitat and resiliency to climate change driven extreme weather.

See other projects funded in the Finger Lakes news section below.

NEWS AND SUCCESS STORIES

Cayuga Lake Watershed:

The Cayuga Lake Watershed Network (CLWN) – September e-News

[See articles](#) on:

- CLWN celebrates 25 years of service.

⁷ <http://people.hws.edu/halfman/Data/water-15-02363.pdf>

- Recipient of the 2023 David Morehouse award: Dr. Liz Thornedike
- Watershed Partners & Elected Representatives Cruise
- Updates on hydrilla
- Spike in HABs in September
- Events

The Cayuga Lake Watershed Network (CLWN)- Network News

[This 12-page issue](#)⁸ is filled with information and updates about our watershed work:

- Hydrilla along the Sheldrake-Wyers shoreline;
- Your hydrilla questions answered;
- Letter from the Steward;
- The 2023 Annual Appeal;
- A new generation of leaders: 2023 Interns & Program Associate;
- Celebrating 25 Years of CLWN;
- Raingardens for runoff reduction;
- FEMA expands potential flood areas;
- Congrats Tom Casella & the James C. White Memorial Prize;
- Concern about bridge construction impacts to Salmon Creek;
- CLWN Board support for Owasco Lake Watershed Rules & Regulations;
- Spring 2023 community conference report;
- Upcoming Events in the Cayuga Lake watershed.

Community Science Institute (CSI) Monthly bulletin.

[CSI news](#)

- Volunteer Awards 2023
- CSI's 2023 membership drive
- Monitoring Program Updates - August HABs, Synoptic Monitoring Events, Biomonitoring, and the Red Flag Program
- News, articles of interest, and upcoming events

Cayuga County Water Quality Management Agency News – September

Cayuga County covers a number of watersheds. See their [county's Water Quality Management Agency news](#) including articles on:

- September spike in HABs
- New Watershed Inspector for Owasco
- Summer tour
- Cayuga Lake Watershed Network's 25 years of service
- Cruise on Cayuga Lake with State Elected officials and watershed partners.
- Updates from the Hydrilla Task Force

⁸ <https://www.cayugalake.org/wp-content/uploads/2023-i1-2-CLWN-NN-WEB.pdf>

Finger Lakes:

Agricultural Nonpoint Source Abatement and Control Grant Awards – Finger Lakes region.

Round 29 Agricultural Nonpoint Source Abatement and Control Program Project Descriptions All projects support the New York State Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) Program by funding the implementation of agricultural Best Management Practices (BMPs) to protect natural resources while maintaining the economic viability of New York State's diverse agricultural community. [See all awards.](#)

- \$259,785 was awarded to the Onondaga County Soil and Water Conservation District to work with one farm in the **Skaneateles Lake Watershed.**
- \$56,940 was awarded to the Onondaga County Soil and Water Conservation District to work with two farms in the **Skaneateles Lake Watershed.**
- \$490,634 was awarded to the Onondaga County Soil and Water Conservation District to work with 10 farms in the **Otisco Lake Watershed.**
- \$258,748 was awarded to the Onondaga County Soil and Water Conservation District to work with one farm in the **Skaneateles Lake Watershed.**
- \$227,376 was awarded to the Ontario County Soil and Water Conservation District to work with one farm in the **Canandaigua Lake Watershed.**
- \$505,770 was awarded to the Yates County Soil and Water Conservation District to work with 11 farms in the **Seneca Lake Watershed.**

Finger Lakes Natural Heritage Area Feasibility Study Completed

The National Park Service (NPS) today delivered the final Finger Lakes National Heritage Area Feasibility Study to Congress. The feasibility study determined that the 14 county study area in the Finger Lakes region of New York state meets the congressionally established criteria to be eligible for inclusion as part of the National Heritage Area System. The counties included in the study area included Cayuga, Chemung, Cortland, Livingston, Monroe, Onondaga, Ontario, Schuyler, Seneca, Steuben, Tioga, Tompkins, Wayne, and Yates.

The study found that Central New York's landscape is nationally important for its association with the distinct geological formations of the Finger Lakes. This landscape served as home to North American democracy via the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, as the breadbasket of the Northeast and as the playground for generations of Americans and international visitors.

[See the final feasibility study](#)⁹.

Legislation would designate the Finger Lakes region as a National Heritage Area.

Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand is planning on introducing the Finger Lakes National Heritage Area Act to the Senate when they return from recess in September.

If it does pass, the bill would provide funding to preserve the area's natural and historic resources.

This is the final leg of a two-step process after a feasibility study was completed in 2019.

National Heritage Areas are established by Congress to recognize a region's natural, cultural or historic significance. [Read more](#)¹⁰.

⁹ <https://parkplanning.nps.gov/document.cfm?parkID=415&projectID=91275&documentID=129656>

¹⁰ <https://spectrumlocalnews.com/nys/central-ny/news/2023/08/15/legislation-would-designate-finger-lakes-region-as-a-national-heritage-area>

Cargill Trying to Sell its Cayuga Lake Salt Mine, According to Report; CLEAN Urges Decommissioning Instead of Sale

Cargill Inc. is working with a financial advisor to sell its giant salt mine under Cayuga Lake and exit the deicing salt business, according a recent report in The Deal, a Manhattan-based financial website. [Read the article.](#)

Cayuga County – (Owasco, Cayuga, Skaneateles, and more)

Auburn, Owasco considering legal action, other options after NY 'failed us' on watershed rules

Many are disappointed after the state responded to proposed revisions to the Owasco Lake watershed's rules and regulations. The long-awaited response from the state Department of Health comes three years after local stakeholders, including the city of Auburn and town of Owasco, developed and submitted proposed changes to the watershed rules and regulations. The rules haven't been updated since 1984.

The Citizen reviewed the two proposals and found significant differences between the state and local plans, particularly in the area of nutrient management — a point of contention among farms that operate within the watershed. The local proposal would update the watershed rules and regulations to include prohibitions on applying manure and commercial fertilizers for farms with 7 or more acres of land. The local plan would also prohibit livestock access to watercourses, such as brooks and streams, except for designated areas.

Other proposed rule changes would include preventing feed storage areas from being within 250 feet of Owasco Lake's high water mark.

But the state's response, which was obtained by The Citizen, omits those proposed policy changes. Under the nutrient management heading, the state Department of Health encourages non-concentrated animal feeding operation farms to participate in the state's Agricultural Environmental Management program, which is voluntary. [Read the entire article.](#)

Owasco

Owasco Watershed Lake Association (OWLA) – Voice of the Lake

The [latest edition](#)¹¹ includes articles on:

- Investigating a lake dredging program
- Scipio ditch remediation work
- Position openings
- Forum details (sorry—the date has past)

Skaneateles

Skaneateles Lake Association

[In this issue:](#)

- Susan Rowe -- new Community Engagement Coordinator.
- Managing leaf litter to contain nutrients
- Skaneateles special report

¹¹ <https://mailchi.mp/4bd9d4905b84/september-2023-voice-of-the-lake-newsletter?e=b5f594ac5b>.

Land Acquisition in Central New York to Protect Drinking Water

DEC and Central New York Land Trust, Inc., (CNYLT) have announced [the acquisition of 144 acres of land near Skaneateles Lake](#), a drinking water source for the city of Syracuse. The project was funded through the State's [Water Quality Improvement Project \(WQIP\) Program](#).

CNYLT intends to acquire multiple parcels near the lake with the remaining funds by summer 2024.

CNYLT acquired the 144-acre O'Neill Parcel for \$900,000, using a portion of its \$4 million WQIP Land Acquisition for Source Water Protection grant awarded by DEC.

New York

Adirondack Road Salt Reduction Task Force Assessment and Recommendations:

[This report of the Adirondack Road Salt Reduction Task Force](#)¹² presents the findings, review, and recommendations of the Task Force with respect to road salt contamination and winter road management practices within the Adirondack Park. It also contains recommendations for an Adirondack Park Road Salt Reduction Pilot Program.

New legislation for HABs? Sen. Harckham's bill could give municipalities a tool kit of solutions

New York state Senator Pete Harckham, Chairman of the state Senate Environmental Conservation Committee, is set to introduce a bill targeting Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) across various fresh water sources in the state.

[Read on.](#)

Great Lakes

Clock ticks for water utilities to join national PFAS settlements

Thousands of water utilities across the Great Lakes region and nationwide will decide in the next three months whether to join two multibillion-dollar, class-action settlements against the largest producers of toxic PFAS chemicals that have tainted drinking water supplies. [Read the full story by Great Lakes Now.](#)

What's being done about plastic trash getting into the Great Lakes?

This month, two studies on plastic waste in the Great Lakes were published in the Canadian Journal of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences. In both studies, the authors advised that it would be helpful if a bi-national agency would give some direction; they formally petitioned policy makers to include microplastics as a chemical to be regulated. [Read the full story by Bridge Michigan.](#)

U.S. EPA approves Ohio EPA's controversial plan to reduce harmful algal blooms in Lake Erie

The U.S. Environmental

Protection Agency approved a plan Thursday to reduce the amount of phosphorus flowing into the Maumee River and eventually into Lake Erie, where the farm nutrient is considered the main contributor to the creation of harmful algal blooms. [Read the full story](#)¹³ by The Plain Dealer.

Buffalo Sewer Authority moves to remove forever chemicals from landfill leachate through firm's new tech

StreamGo, a Hamilton, Ontario, company, has developed a process that not only removes PFAS, but also deconstructs the chemicals so they're no longer harmful to the environment and humans. StreamGo has

¹² <https://www.adirondackexplorer.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/adirondack-road-salt-report-final.pdf>

¹³ <https://www.cleveland.com/news/2023/09/us-epa-approves-ohio-epas-controversial-plan-to-reduce-harmful-algal-blooms-in-lake-erie.html>

turned to the Buffalo Sewer Authority to help prove it has developed a system that can be applied to wastewater heavily contaminated with PFAS. [Read the full story by The Buffalo News.](#)

Supreme Court receives friend of the court briefs in manure case

Business groups and environmental groups filed amicus briefs in a case the Michigan Supreme Court will settle regarding manure spreading on farm fields. [Read the full story by Michigan Radio.](#)

Federal News

EPA Issues Final Rule to Strengthen Water Protections, Support Clear and Timely Reviews of Infrastructure and Development Projects

On September 14, the U.S. [EPA announced a final rule](#) to restore the fundamental authority granted by Congress to states, territories, and tribes to protect water resources that are essential to healthy people and thriving communities. The agency's final Clean Water Act Section 401 Water Quality Certification Improvement Rule will support clear, efficient, and focused water quality reviews of infrastructure and development projects that are key to economic growth.

Federal bill aims to curb plastic pollution in all U.S. waterways

U.S. Senator Dick Durbin (D-IL) has introduced a bill to keep companies from dumping plastic pellets into waterways. [Read the full story.](#)

To Conform with Recent Supreme Court Decision, EPA and Army Amend “Waters of the United States” Rule

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Department of the Army (the agencies) announced a [final rule amending the 2023 definition of “waters of the United States” to conform with the recent Supreme Court decision in Sackett v. EPA](#)¹⁴. The agencies are committed to following the law and implementing the Clean Water Act to deliver the essential protections that safeguard the nation's waters from pollution and degradation. This action provides the clarity that is needed to advance these goals, while moving forward with infrastructure projects, economic opportunities, and agricultural activities.

EPA Releases Initial Nationwide Monitoring Data on 29 PFAS and Lithium

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency released the first set of data collected under the fifth Unregulated Contaminant Monitoring Rule (UCMR 5). In the latest action to deliver on EPA's [PFAS Strategic Roadmap](#), UCMR 5 will provide new data that will improve EPA's understanding of the frequency that 29 PFAS and lithium are found in the nation's drinking water systems, and at what levels. The monitoring data on PFAS and lithium will help the Agency make determinations about future actions to protect public health under the Safe Drinking Water Act. This action advances the Biden-Harris Administration's commitment to combat PFAS pollution and safeguard drinking water for all people. [Read the entire article.](#)

EPA Finalizes Rule to Require Reporting of PFAS Data to Better Protect Communities from Forever Chemicals

On September 28, the EPA finalized a rule that will provide EPA, its partners, and the public with the largest-ever dataset of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) manufactured and used in the United States. This rule builds on over two years of progress on the Biden-Harris Administration's action plan to combat PFAS pollution, safeguarding public health and advancing environmental justice, and is a key action in EPA's PFAS Strategic Roadmap.

¹⁴ <https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/conform-recent-supreme-court-decision-epa-and-army-amend-waters-united-states-rule>

PFAS are a category of manufactured chemicals that have been used in industry and consumer products since the 1940s. PFAS have characteristics that make them useful in a variety of products, including nonstick cookware, waterproof clothing, and firefighting foam, as well as in certain manufacturing processes. [See press release](#)¹⁵.

Across the Nation

Appeals court nixes Michigan PFAS water limits in ruling for 3M

A Michigan Court of Appeals panel has struck down state restrictions on per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) levels in drinking water, but left the regulatory rules in place as the state pursues an appeal. [Read the full story by Bridge Michigan](#).

AGRICULTURE

Biden-Harris Administration Provides Historic \$3 Billion through Inflation Reduction Act for Climate-Smart Practices on Agricultural Lands

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is making more than \$3 billion in funding available for agricultural producers and forest landowners nationwide to participate in voluntary conservation programs and adopt climate-smart practices in fiscal year 2024. [Read more](#)¹⁶.

FOR YOUR RESIDENTS— Public Service Announcements to Share with Your Residents

Septic System Care and Maintenance to Protect Water Quality

Nitrogen pollution from cesspools and septic systems can degrade water quality contributing to toxic algae blooms and beach closures. When septic systems are well-functioning, the health of the nation's communities and ecosystems is better protected.

A conventional septic system is not designed to remove nitrogen. Discharge of nitrogen from an average residential septic system is estimated to be from 20-50 pounds of nitrogen per year.

Consider the following information and tips about septic system care:

1. **Think at the Sink:** What goes down the drain has a big impact on your septic system. Fats, grease, and solids can clog a system's pipes and drainfield.
2. **Don't Overload the Commode:** A toilet is not a trash can. Disposable diapers and wipes, feminine hygiene products, coffee grounds, cigarette butts, and cat litter can damage a septic system.
3. **Don't Strain Your Drain:** Use water efficiently and stagger use of water-based appliances. Too much water use at once can overload a system that hasn't been pumped recently.
4. **Shield Your Field:** Tree and shrub roots, cars, and livestock can damage your septic drainfield.
5. **Keep It Clean:** Contamination can occur when a septic system leaks due to improper maintenance. Be sure your drinking water is safe to drink by testing it regularly.
6. **Protect It and Inspect It:** Regular septic system maintenance can save homeowners thousands of dollars in repairs and protect public health.

¹⁵ <https://www.epa.gov/newsreleases/epa-finalizes-rule-require-reporting-pfas-data-better-protect-communities-forever#:~:text=The%20reporting%20rule%20under%20the,information%20related%20to%20chemical%20identity%2C>

¹⁶ https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/news/biden-harris-administration-makes-available-historic-3-billion-for-climate-smart-practices?utm_campaign=0928climatesolutions

7. **Pump Your Tank:** Ensure your septic tank is pumped at regularly intervals as recommended by a professional and/or local permitting authority.

If it is time to replace your septic system, consider replacing it with an Innovative/Alternative On-site Treatment System (I/A OWTS). These systems treat nitrogen, to protect ground and surface waters better than a traditional septic system. Contact your county about possible funding for septic system replacement. Learn more about [SepticSmart Week](#) and [Decentralized Wastewater Treatment Workforce](#).

Interrupting runoff with a rain garden

Rain gardens help to slow runoff into lakes and streams—keeping nutrients on the land, rather than in the water where they can be harmful. See this video about the [benefits of Rain Gardens](#)¹⁷, how they work, and how to plan and build a rain garden for your home. This work was done as a partnership between the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network, Seneca County Cooperative Extension, and Owasco Watershed and Lake Association (OWLA).

Animals and Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs)

Keep animals, pets or livestock, out of any surface scums or heavily discolored water. HABs can stick to and become concentrated on animal fur, creating a health risk when the animal grooms itself. This is particularly important because HABs may release a fast-acting nerve toxin that can be dangerous for pets, especially dogs that swim in blooms. Seek veterinary assistance if your pet shows any signs of distress after exposure to a bloom. These signs include:

- Stumbling, seizures, convulsions, or paralysis
- Excessive salivation or drooling
- Disorientation, inactivity or depression
- Elevated heart rate and difficulty breathing

If you see or suspect any of these symptoms, particularly within 30 minutes to a few hours after exposure to an algal bloom, seek immediate veterinary care. For more information, [visit DEC's Information about Harmful Algal Blooms webpage](#).

¹⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rb7PBaTq1ss>