



**Cayuga Lake Watershed Intermunicipal Organization
(CWIO)**



CWIO News February 2024

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CWIO NEWS – Roxy Johnston

At the 1/24 meeting, we had a robust set of discussions, actions, and updates. If you want to listen to past meetings of CWIO, we keep the recordings for about a year. Reach out if you would like to us to send you the audio/video. A very brief summary of the long meeting (over 2 hours!) is:

Presentation: Thanks to Sarah Rickard, Lauren Townley, and Tony Prestigiacomo, Division of Water of the DEC for joining CWIO for the January 24 meeting where they went into detail about how the waters are selected for the 303(d) lists of impairments and explained more about 9 Element Plans and Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs). [See slides of their presentation](#). The recording will be posted soon on the Resources page.

PFAS Grant Support: [CWIO supported a grant proposal](#) to do targeted water sampling to identify sources of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in the Finger Lakes. The proposed project, led by Damian Helbling, will contribute to efforts towards the public education and action on PFAS in the Cayuga Lake watershed.

Watershed Rules and Regulations: In an effort to clarify the allowances and limitations of Watershed Rules and Regulations in the state of New York, CWIO [reviewed a letter](#) urging the state to consistently uphold [Public Health Law Section 1100, Title 10 of the New York Codes, Rules, and Regulations](#), which empowers water purveyors to develop and update WRRs which are an effective tool to protect public drinking water sources from point and nonpoint source pollution, as evidenced by the water supplies for the City of Syracuse and New York City. CWIO will consider action on this letter in February.

2024 Organizational: CWIO completed its [organizational document for 2024](#) including the 2024 budget, the workplan for 2024, and appointments of officers and committee members.

Project approval: CWIO approved the Watershed Manager to assist with a raingarden project in the Town of Covert in Seneca County.

Speakers: be watching for a poll to help determine speakers for CWIO for 2024.

Dues: All municipalities should have received their dues invoices by now. Please check that they are in the pipeline although the deadline is not until June 30.

FROM THE WATERSHED MANAGER – Isaac Walker

The months of January and February have been busy for sure! I capped off January with the Finger

Lakes Research Conference at Hobart and William Smith Colleges where was happy to meet with a few folks from our watershed and catch up with others who I haven't seen since I started this job (It's been almost 3 months already!).

February has been all in on what I call the "real" work. I am working on the Town of Covert rain garden project and picking back up some projects that are left from last year. More to come on those in the future!

In addition, Ian Smith (SWIO) and I, in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) office have applied for a Participatory Science grant through USFS on Finger Lakes National Forest Land in the Town of Hector. The goals of this project are twofold: to measure the efficacy of existing best management practices (BMP) and to identify new BMP implementation opportunities on forest land. If the grant is funded, we will be looking for volunteers (a key component of this grant) to help with sampling for the research so keep an eye out for that.

Ian and I have also been continuing to work on the very large road drainage assessment project in Seneca County. The Seneca Lake watershed segment of the grant is pretty much finished and we will soon be moving to the Cayuga Lake side. I'll be picking the Ulysses ditch project back up as well.

As always, if you have any questions or just want to chat, feel free to reach out to me!

NEWS WITHIN THE CAYUGA LAKE WATERSHED

Cayuga Lake Watershed Network (CLWN)– Latest News

The Cayuga Lake Watershed Network partners with CWIO on watershed issues and are experts at outreach. [Read their latest news](#) including articles on:

- Litter clean ups in spring.
- Harmful Algal Bloom survey.
- Invitation to become part of a CLWN committee.
- Macrophyte (aquatic plant) survey

DEC to Cargill: Give Us Detailed Reports on Potential Dangers of New Storage Site for Water Leaking Into Cayuga Salt Mine

Peter Mantius has written more details describing the concerns over water leakage into the Cayuga Salt Mine in his latest *Water Front* report. [Read the detailed article](#).

1/18 to 3/2 - Draft Cayuga County Local Solid Waste Management Plan – Public Comment Period Now Open

New York State requires that all mandated Planning Units provide and continually update a Local Solid Waste Management Plan (LSWMP) on behalf of the Towns, Villages, and Cities within. Cayuga County, as a NYS DEC mandated Planning Unit, is responsible for providing this LSWMP on behalf of its 33 municipalities. An LSWMP is a planning document intended to be used as a tool for organization and decision making in regard to a Planning Unit's solid waste management and recycling program.

View the Plan here: <https://www.cayugacounty.us/1855/Local-Solid-Waste-Management-Plan-LSWMP>

Individuals wishing to comment on the Plan have the opportunity to submit written comments from January 18th until March 2nd, 2024. Comments can be submitted by email to etuthill@cayugacounty.us or by mail to 160 Genesee St, 5th Floor, Auburn, NY 13021. Please include "Comments on Cayuga County LSWMP" in the subject line of the email.

The Cayuga County Department of Planning and Economic Development will be hosting both an in-person and virtual informational meeting open to the public. The intent of the informational meetings is to provide an overview of the key elements of the plan and allow attendees to ask questions or submit comments.

In-Person Meeting – Will be held on February 13, 2024 from 6:30pm to 8:30pm at the Cayuga-Onondaga BOCES (in Conference Rooms 1+2) at 1879 W Genesee Street Rd, Auburn, NY 13021.

Virtual Meeting – Will be held on zoom on February 20, 2024 from 6:30pm to 8:30pm. To [Register](#).

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES, FUNDED WORK, and ASSISTANCE.

2/29 - NOAA 2024 Great Lakes Bay Watershed Education and Training Grant

Applications for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA's) 2024 Great Lakes Bay Watershed Education and Training (B-WET) federal funding opportunity are due by **February 29, 2024**. This competitive funding program supports projects that provide meaningful watershed educational experiences for youth and related professional development for teachers, while advancing regional Great Lakes watershed education priorities. Find more information on NOAA's B-WET webpage.

3/4 9:30 - WIIA and IMG Grants for Clean Water Infrastructure Projects

Governor Kathy Hochul announced [\\$325 million in grants is available for clean water infrastructure projects](#) through the next round of the State's Water Infrastructure Improvement (WIIA) and Intermunicipal Grant (IMG) programs. This round of WIIA/IMG includes improvements to maximize benefits for small, rural and disadvantaged communities. [Attend the webinar](#).

The Environmental Facilities Corporation (EFC) administers the WIIA and IMG programs in coordination with DEC and the Department of Health. [Applications and eligibility criteria are available on EFC's website](#).

3/8 Draft Guidelines for Available for Comment on Environmental Bond Act Draft Eligibility Guidelines to Support Planting 25 Million Trees by 2033

The NYS DEC released for public comment new proposed eligibility guidelines to improve, expand, and assess the state's forestry efforts on public and private lands under the historic \$4.2 billion Clean Water, Clean Air and Green Jobs Environmental Bond Act of 2022. The guidelines will help support implementation of Governor Kathy Hochul's initiative to plant 25 million trees by 2033 by building capacity for production of plant materials and investing in a comprehensive data tracking and management system for forestry projects. [Read more](#).

2/23, 3/29, 4/26, 5/31, 6/28, 7/26, 8/30, 9/27, 10/25 - NYS EFC Community Assistance Teams (CAT) Offer Help with Water Infrastructure Funding

The NYS Environmental Facilities Corporation (EFC) Community Assistance Teams (CAT) help municipalities address their clean water infrastructure needs. Teams host regional events and connect communities with experts who can help them undertake their critical water infrastructure projects. These teams provide on-site or virtual consultations to help communities across the state jump start planning, submit funding applications, and see their projects through to completion.

Virtual Q&A Sessions are planned for Friday 2/23 and [will continue monthly](#) on the last Friday of the month through October 2024. [Learn more](#), sign up for updates, or register for an upcoming webinar.

3/15 - 2024 Northern Borders Regional Commission Catalyst Program

The Northern Borders Regional Commission (NBRC) is making available up to \$50 million in federal resources through the Catalyst Program in 2024. Cayuga and Seneca counties fall into this region. The Catalyst Program will hold two funding rounds with up to \$30 million available in the spring round and up to \$20 million available in the fall round. Details on eligible projects and award maximums are available on [NBRC's webpage](#).

- Pre-Application (Required) Due on **March 15, 2024**, 5:00 p.m.
- Application (By Invitation) Due on **May 3, 2024**, 5:00 p.m.

Find registration information on [NBRC's website](#).

EPA Water Finance Learning Modules Are Available

The [EPA's water finance learning modules](#) provide information on different financing sources and funding topics to decision makers who are considering water infrastructure investments

- The SRF 101 learning module is for potential [State Revolving Fund \(SRF\) borrowers](#) interested in learning about the Clean Water and Drinking Water SRF Loan programs.
- The WIFIA 101 learning module is for prospective borrowers interested in learning about [Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act \(WIFIA\) financing](#).
- [FITS](#) is a one-stop-shop tool that explains how users can integrate various federal funding sources to support activities that protect sources of drinking water. Users may navigate between source water protection funding sources, planning and funding coordination information, and examples of funding sources in action, to inspire their own source water protection activities.
- The [Sustainable Financing Management Planning for Water Utilities](#) learning module is for utility managers and other professionals seeking to learn more about innovative financing through case study profiles.
- The [Financing Stormwater Management Infrastructure](#) learning module is for municipal officials and utility managers seeking to identify financing to support capital investments in stormwater management.

Biden-Harris Administration Makes Record Investment in Private Lands Conservation as Part of Investing in America Agenda

In fiscal year 2023, USDA supported more than 45,000 conservation contracts, more than any year in the 89-year history of USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), totaling over \$2.8 billion in financial assistance to producers for conservation efforts. NRCS also released updated state-by-state data showing where investments went in FY2023 for resources provided under both the Farm Bill and Inflation Reduction Act. [Read the entire story](#).

A New Era for NY's Water – An Analysis of Clean Water Infrastructure Spending

This report by the Environmental Advocates of NY highlights how funding has been spent since 2017 in NYS. [Read the full report](#).

TRAINING, RESOURCES, and WATERSHED PLANNING

2/27 - 2 to 3:30 Lead Service Line Guidance Webinar

Developing a lead service line (LSL) inventory and identifying the location of LSLs is the first step for beginning LSL replacement and protecting public health. The purpose of this presentation is to walk through the EPA's Guidance for Developing and Maintaining a Lead Service Line Inventory. The guidance provides support for the service line inventory requirements according to the 2021 Lead & Copper Rule Revisions. [See the announcement](#). [Register](#).

5/8/24 Roadway and Roadside Drainage Workshop – Cornell Local Roads

At Ontario County SWCD, 480 Main St Canandaigua. [Register](#). Who should attend: Crew leaders, foremen, equipment operators, superintendents of small highway departments and others who want to gain knowledge of open drainage systems.

39 New Municipalities to Receive Free Technical Assistance to Protect Drinking Water Sources

Today, the New York State Departments of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and Health (DOH) announced 39 new municipalities will receive free Technical Assistance to help protect public drinking water sources through the [Drinking Water Source Protection Program \(DWSP2\)](#). The multi-agency initiative, led by DEC and DOH in collaboration with the Departments of Agriculture and Markets (AGM) and State (DOS), empowers municipalities to take critical actions to improve and protect public drinking water sources and the environment.

Communities will work with technical assistance providers to develop and initiate implementation of each community's unique DWSP2, which occurs at no cost to participating municipalities. The program is designed to build off previous work, help align priorities, and fill gaps within a municipality's current and future source water protection efforts.

A [full list of participating communities](#) can be found on the DEC's website.

Participating municipalities will receive assistance in the following areas:

- Assessing modern day vulnerabilities
- Engaging in preventative actions to protect drinking water sources from contamination
- Identifying effective actions to address potential contaminant sources
- Implementing source water protection actions

The free technical assistance provided by the program helps take the complexity and guesswork out of plan development and the initial implementation of a DWSP2 plan. Additionally, municipalities have several tools available to establish initial implementation activities focused on reducing and preventing pollutants from reaching the source water area for their public water supply, such as:

- Work with landowners to put an easement on a piece of land, or purchase a property that is near a drinking water source;
- Make use of available state and federal funding, programs, and other resources to aid with the cost of implementation activities;
- Establish a protective buffer or develop and implement local protective zoning around their source that controls activities or land uses that can threaten the water supply; and
- Conduct education campaigns for their community to help them understand their part in protecting the source.

As of January 2024, the DWSP2 has assisted 74 municipalities, totaling 46 plans, with creating action-oriented, community-driven DWSP2 plans to protect drinking water sources. Eighteen of those communities have completed the plan development process, subsequently received State Acceptance, and have moved forward to plan implementation.

Communities interested in the DWSP2 are encouraged to fill out our [Interest Form](#) and a member of the DWSP2 team will contact you to discuss further. You can also [learn more on DEC's website](#) or contact source.water@dec.ny.gov for more information. [Read the full press release](#).

MONITORING and RESEARCH

3/5 - About Phosphorus and the Health of Our Lakes – Dan Egan

Finger Lakes Land Trust and Finger Lakes Institute will host on March 5th at 7:30 pm “A Conversation with Author Dan Egan: About Phosphorus and the Health of Our Lakes.” Register at <https://www.flit.org/events/a-conversation-with-author-dan-egan/>.

3/9 – Bob Brower Scientific Symposium hosted by the Owasco Watershed Lake Association

The annual Bob Brower Scientific Symposium in Plain English-Our Lake Our Legacy will be on March 9 starting at 9 am. Registration will be on <http://owla.org> and it is FREE. Continuing Education Credits being offered by the American Water Works Association.

Chloride hydrogeochemistry of the Finger Lakes in Central and Western New York, USA

John D. Halfman, Mary Bridget Horvath

Road deicing salts have impacted the hydrogeochemistry of lakes throughout the snow-belt region of the globe. [This paper](#) advances our understanding of the historical change in salt concentrations in, and sources to, the Finger Lakes of western and central New York state, and compares the results to other lakes across the globe. Surface water samples from Honeoye, Canandaigua, Keuka, Seneca, Cayuga, Owasco, Skaneateles and Otisco lakes were analyzed for chloride (Cl) concentrations.

Research points to water treatment plants removing microplastics from Lake Erie water

A team of researchers is studying the effectiveness of water treatment plants in removing microplastics from Lake Erie water, especially smaller nanoplastics, and whether certain treatment configurations work better than others. [Read the full story](#) by The Plain Dealer.

Importance of Hemlocks in Water Quality and the Treats from Hemlock Wooley Adelgid.

This short 3-minute video gives a good [overview of the importance of hemlocks](#) to water quality throughout the Finger Lakes.

REGULATORY NEWS

SPDES Compliance and Enforcement Annual Report for State Fiscal Year 2022/2023

DEC's Division of Water has posted the SPDES Compliance and Enforcement Annual Report for State Fiscal Year 2022/2023. This report provides details on oversight activities that protect waters of New York State, primarily through the State Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (SPDES). These annual reports focus on statewide efforts to monitor discharges to waters through facility inspections; assessment of self-reported data and information; assessment of compliance with issued permits and Orders on Consent; and adherence to other applicable laws and requirements. [Read the report on DEC's webpage.](#)

DEC Releases Draft Water Quality Guidance to Address Emerging Contaminants from Publicly Owned Treatment Works

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Commissioner Basil Seggos today released new water quality guidance that will advance the State's regulation of the emerging contaminants Perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), Perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS), and 1,4-Dioxane. The draft guidance for Publicly Owned Treatment Plants (POTWs) builds upon [guidance released last year](#) for industrial discharges and supports the State's ongoing efforts to protect public health and the environment and prevent exposure to emerging contaminants through the protection of drinking water sources. The [draft guidance](#) is available on DEC's website as is [information about PFAs](#) and the [full press release](#). Unfortunately the comment period has passed.

2/19/24 - DEC Seeks Comments to Further Protect Freshwater Wetlands

DEC Commissioner Basil Seggos is encouraging New Yorkers to [review and comment on the development of proposed regulations that would further protect freshwater wetlands statewide](#). DEC released the Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPR) to begin developing regulations to implement the new law that expands the number of wetlands regulated by DEC.

Starting in January 2025, the scope of regulated smaller wetlands of “unusual importance” will be expanded to wetlands that meet one of 11 specific criteria in order to provide additional fish and wildlife habitat and to protect communities from flooding. The ANPR seeks feedback on the potential criteria that will be used to classify these newly protected wetlands.

Find more information about the public comment period and view the ANPR in the [New York State Register](#) or on [DEC's website](#). Submit comments by **February 19, 2024**.

3/4/24 - NRCS Seeks Public Comment on 8 Conservation Practices

USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is seeking [public comment](#) on proposed revisions to eight national conservation practice standards. Comments are due March 4, 2024.

Proposed revisions to the national conservation practice standards include:

- Field Border (Code 386)
- Filter Strip (Code 393)
- Grazing Management (Code 528)
- Hedgerow Planting (Code 422)
- Mulching (Code 484)
- Seasonal Water Management for Wildlife (Code 646)
- Structure for Water Control (Code 587), and
- Wetland Restoration (Code 657).

Proposed text can be found on [this NRCS webpage](#). Changes are included in [this notice on the Federal Register](#). Comments should be submitted via [regulations.gov](#) or via mail by March 4, 2024. [Learn more](#).

3/28 - Publicly Owned Treatment Works (POTW) Annual Flow Certification Reporting

DEC's Bureau of Water Compliance is now accepting the 2023 [annual flow certification](#) for the period January 1, 2023 through December 31, 2023. Certification is required by **March 28** each year for Publicly Owned Treatment Works (POTWs) with State Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (SPDES) permits. The form may be attached with the February 2024 Discharge Monitoring Report or [completed online](#).

Contact annual flow certification program staff at 518-402-8168 with questions.

Draft 2024 Bridge and Culvert Guidance

DEC has announced new [draft Guidance for the Review of Bridge and Culvert Projects in Nontidal Waters Requiring a Protection of Waters Permit and a Water Quality Certificate](#) (PDF) which is now available for public review and comment.

NOTE: The period for public review and comment has been extended until February 23, 2024. This guidance describes minimum design requirements and other considerations used during review of bridge and culvert projects requiring Protection of Waters permits. [Read more](#).

INVASIVE SPECIES

Grant Awards to Support Invasive Species Prevention

Governor Kathy Hochul has announced nearly [\\$3 million in grants for 43 projects to reduce the negative impacts of invasive species](#) on New York State’s natural resources, economy, and communities. These grants are part of DEC's Invasive Species Grant Program, which provides funding for aquatic and terrestrial invasive species spread prevention, early detection and rapid response, lake management planning, research, and education and outreach.

Congratulations to the counties in the Cayuga Lake watershed for their successful grant applications for funding. [Find the full list](#) of awards on DEC's Invasive Species Grant Program projects.

Tompkins County

- Tompkins County Soil and Water Conservation District: \$51,718 – Aquatic Invasive Species Watercraft Spread Prevention – Stewards – Boat Decontamination Program

Cortland County

- Cortland County Soil and Water Conservation District: \$122,705 – Aquatic Invasive Species Watercraft Spread Prevention Boat Steward Education and Outreach/Voluntary Inspection
- Research Foundation for SUNY Cortland: \$98,630 – 2023 Invasive Species Research

Ontario County

- City of Canandaigua: \$140,685 - Aquatic Invasive Species Watercraft Spread Prevention Boat Steward Education and Outreach/Voluntary Inspection
- Cornell University: \$83,292 - 2023 Invasive Species Research

NEWS from the FINGER LAKES REGION and Beyond

Tree Sales Throughout the Finger Lakes through SWCD Offices:

- Ontario County Tree and Shrub Sale – [See details.](#)
- Seneca County SWCD Tree and Shrub Sale - [See details.](#)
- Schuyler County SWCD Tree and Shrub Sale - [See details.](#)

Stormwater Training Workshop Series Offered

A series of workshops will focus on the [new MS4 Permit](#) and the requirements of the new Stormwater Design Manual. The series organized by the Central NY Regional Planning and Development Board includes:

Tues 2/27 8:30-1:00 – The New MS4 Permit. [Register.](#)

Tues 3/19 8:30-1:00 - Stormwater Hydrology and the New Design Manual. [Register.](#)

Tues 4/9 8:30-1:00 – Post-construction Stormwater Management Practices and the New Design Manual. [Register.](#)

Tues 4/30 8:30-1:00 - SWPPP Preparation and Review. [Register.](#)

Tues 5/14 8:30-1:00 – MS4 Program - Strategies for Success. [Register.](#)

Finger Lakes-Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance (FLOPA)

This [edition of the newsletter](#) highlights successful Water Quality Monitoring Programs and Education and Outreach Efforts implemented throughout the Finger Lakes – Lake Ontario Drainage Basin and includes many success stories from across the watershed. Projects within counties in the Cayuga Watershed were highlighted for their work in conjunction with FLOPA:

Schuyler County – Retention pond, Culvert upsizing and stabilization (town of Hector), Culvert replacement (town of Hector)

Seneca County – Vineyard stormwater control, Manure compost facility, Water and sediment control basin,

Ontario County – Implement conservation practices on farmland (town of Geneva), BMPs for stormwater on ag land (town of Geneva)

FLLT January 2024 news

The Finger Lakes Land Trust work protects not only land, but waters as well. Read about their most recent actions and successes including:

- Protected rare undeveloped Canandaigua Lake Shoreline
- Land added to the Cayuga Cliffs preserve in the town of Lansing
- Addition of lands along Salmon Creek in Tompkins County in the town of Lansing.

[Read the full edition.](#)

Owasco (also see crossover reports under Cayuga)

OLWMC: New Signage to Increase Awareness of Watershed

A new series of signs has been created and installed to raise awareness of Owasco Lake's tributaries and their role in the watershed.

As part of its Tributary Adoption and Identification Project (TAIP), the Owasco Lake Watershed Management Council (OLWMC) has installed signage at nine tributaries in the Town of Locke and the Town and Village of Moravia. Doctor Adam Effler with the council told Finger Lakes News Radio that these signs help keep the community engaged with the work the council does. [Read more.](#)¹

Seneca (also see crossover reports under Cayuga)

Greenidge Generation announces deal with EPA to clean up coal ash pond

Greenidge Generation announced that the Bitcoin mining operation has agreed to a deal with the EPA to remove a coal ash pond from its property in Dresden at a cost of roughly \$10 million dollars. Along with the cost of the project, Greenidge has also agreed to a fine \$105,000 dollars without admitting any fault.

"(The deal) eliminates a dirty site that has been sitting in Yates County for 60 years. If there is no Greenidge, that coal pond would just continue to be there," said a Greenidge Generation spokesperson. By paying the fine, Greenidge says it has resolved any outstanding issues with the EPA related to Greenidge's reporting and monitoring of the coal ash pond. [Read the entire story.](#)

Skaneateles

Skaneateles Lake Association (SLA) News

Among other items in [this issue](#) are:

- Nine Element Plan - Public Meeting #2. [See the recording.](#)
- WCNY PBS Story on Hemlock Protection
- Protecting the Lake (and Bald Eagles) from Hydrilla
- SLA Lost & Found Posting

Ontario County

2023 Annual Report and 2024 Winter Newsletter from Ontario SWCD

This report from the Ontario County Soil and Water Conservation District is **chock full** of success stories. [Read about](#)

- Roadside Drainage and stabilization projects
- Finger Lakes Phosphorus Reduction Project
- 2023 Achievements in numbers. (impressive!)
- Manure storage, cover and Flare system installed

¹ <https://www.fingerlakesdailynews.com/local/cayuga/olwmc-new-signage-to-increase-awareness-of-watershed>

- Tree and shrub sale
- Workshop on Roadways and Roadside Drainage
- AND MORE.

New York

Black River Initiative 2023 Newsletter

The Tug Hill Commission, in collaboration with DEC's Great Lakes Program and other organizations in the Black River watershed, has released the [2023 Black River Initiative newsletter](#). The newsletter details efforts among the Tug Hill Commission, DEC, Soil and Water Districts and other partners to advance the Black River Watershed Management Plan and Nine Element Watershed Plan.

Adirondacks Seek Solutions to Road Salt Impacts on Water

This article from *The Water Line* in the Adirondacks looks at the challenges of keeping roads safe while minimizing damage to critical water resources. [Read more about suggested solutions.](#)

New York's Commitment to Water Quality

New York State continues to increase its investments in water infrastructure, including [\\$325 million in grant opportunities made available earlier this month](#). With Governor Hochul's proposed Executive Budget, New York will invest a total of \$5.5 billion in water infrastructure since 2017. This funding complements Governor Hochul's State of the State initiative to increase water infrastructure grants for small rural communities from 25 to 50 percent of net eligible project costs to help support smaller communities.

The voter-approved \$4.2 billion Clean Water, Clean Air and Green Jobs Environmental Bond Act of 2022 is advancing historic levels of funding to update aging water infrastructure and protect water quality, strengthen communities' ability to withstand severe storms and flooding, reduce air pollution and lower climate-altering emissions, restore habitats, and preserve outdoor spaces and local farms. The Bond Act provides at least \$650 million for water quality improvement projects. Many of the projects to be funded with Bond Act flood resiliency and restoration monies (at least \$1.1 billion) also improve water quality by reducing polluted runoff. The first round of funding under the Environmental Bond Act was awarded through the WIIA/IMG programs in December 2023, when [Governor Hochul announced \\$479 million](#) in grants for 156 projects across New York State. The funding included a combination of the Governor's historic commitment to water quality infrastructure and \$200 million from the Environmental Bond Act.

The Executive Budget also sustains record funding for the Environmental Protection Fund at \$400 million, helps support numerous water quality improvement programs, projects and studies. The CWIA and EPF, for example, fund DEC's Water Quality Improvement Project (WQIP) program that funds projects that directly improve water quality or aquatic habitat or protect a drinking water source. Last year alone, [\\$108 million in WQIP projects helped fund municipal wastewater treatment upgrades](#), polluted runoff abatement and control, land acquisition projects for drinking water protection, salt storage construction, aquatic connectivity restoration, and marine habitat restoration.

Great Lakes

Creating new ponds in a wetland enhancement project

Construction is underway on a wetland enhancement project at the Lakeview Wildlife Management Area in the town of Ellisburg, New York. The project is a collaboration between New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Great Lakes Commission, Audubon New York, Audubon Great Lakes, and Ducks Unlimited. [Read the full story](#) by WWNY-TV – Watertown, NY.

Decades-long phosphorus study of Lower Fox River shows why it's a big problem for Lake Michigan

The Fox River in Green Bay, Wisconsin, contributes more phosphorus to Lake Michigan than any other tributary. And while Wisconsin has strict rules to limit the amount of phosphorus flowing into its waterways, a new report shows that it hasn't been enough to turn the tide on the problem. [Read the full story by the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel.](#)

Legislators propose extension of bipartisan Great Lakes Restoration Initiative to 2031

Legislators and bipartisan members of the Great Lakes Task Force introduced new legislation Tuesday that would extend the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, a public-private program that has used federal and nonfederal aid to protect and maintain the Great Lakes since 2010. [Read the full story by WWMT-TV – Kalamazoo, MI.](#)

Study calls for EPA to include human well-being in Great Lakes restoration program

In a study released in December, researchers documented the informal shift in priorities by restoration project managers to include human well-being. An environmental social scientist says EPA should consider an increased focus on human well-being in their Great Lakes Restoration Initiative program. [Read the full story by Great Lakes Now.](#)

Those salt piles we dump on our snowy Ohio roads are showing up in freshwater Lake Erie

The use of rock salt may be critically important when it comes to clearing snow and ice from roads in the winter, but it's also a growing threat to the environment, including the freshwater fauna of Lake Erie. [Read the full story by The Plain Dealer.](#)

More mussels: DNR hires specialized biologist and launches new research project

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources' Fisheries Division will be hiring a full-time malacologist – a biologist who studies mollusks, including mussels and clams – which will kickstart a two-year project to centralize mussel data collected across the state. That's important because native mussels are crucial to maintaining healthy freshwater ecosystems. They often live for multiple decades, filtering and purifying water and providing an important food source. But they're increasingly outcompeted by invasive zebra and Quagga mussels. [Read the full story by Michigan Public.](#)

PFAS contamination has grown in Michigan to the point that some Michiganders say presidential leadership is needed to deal with it

The state of Michigan has identified thousands of sites potentially contaminated with the man-made chemical and many Michiganders would like to presidential leadership address the “forever chemicals.” [Read the full story by Michigan Public.](#)

Federal and National News

New PFAS-annihilating technology set to destroy toxic chemicals in Ohio's firefighting foams

Ohio Governor Mike DeWine is partnering with a Columbus-based company to destroy stockpiles of toxic firefighting foams containing PFAS. The program will destroy the aqueous foam and return PFAS-contaminated wastewater to non-detectable levels. [Read the full story by Ideastream Public Media.](#)

'A race to the bottom': Indiana wetlands bill could affect Great Lakes, Mississippi River

Conservation groups and water policy experts feared that a U.S. Supreme Court ruling last year would create a patchwork of state wetland protections, threatening water quality in the Great Lakes and Mississippi River

watersheds. Now they say that fear is becoming a reality with a new Indiana law that will roll back protections for many of Indiana's most regulated wetlands. [Read the full story](#) by the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel.

AGRICULTURE and LANDOWNERS

2/27 9:30 – 3:00 Soil Health Workshop

Join this workshop sponsored by Ontario County Soil and Water and featuring keynote speaker Eric Fuchs speaking on Ag's role in non-point pollution. Eric will share insights on agricultural challenges related to drinking water and agriculture. He will discuss future regulatory issues, consumer sentiment, and the future outlook for these concerns. Eric's journey into regenerative agriculture began on his own operation, emphasizing the benefits of soil health practices for water resources. [Read more.](#)

7/31 - USDA Reopens Signup for Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CRP)

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is now accepting applications for the Continuous Conservation Reserve Program (Continuous CRP) signup. USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) encourages **agricultural producers and landowners** in New York who are interested in conservation opportunities for their land in exchange for yearly rental payments to consider the enrollment options available through Continuous CRP, which also includes the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) offered by FSA partners. Additionally, producers participating in CRP can now apply to re-enroll, if their contracts will expire this year.

To submit an offer, producers should contact the FSA at their local [USDA Service Center](#) by **July 31, 2024**, in order to have an offer effective by **Oct. 1, 2024**.

FSA water quality practices, such as riparian buffers, prairie strips, grassed waterways, and wetlands, will receive an additional 20% incentive. Buffer practices have a positive impact on water quality. Additionally, the Climate-Smart Practice Incentive launched in 2021 is also available in the Continuous signup.

There are several enrollment options within [Continuous CRP](#), including:

- [CREP](#): Working with conservation partners, CREP leverages federal and non-federal funds to target specific state, regional, tribal, or nationally significant conservation concerns.
- [State Acres For Wildlife Enhancement \(SAFE\)](#): The initiative restores vital habitat in order to meet high-priority state wildlife conservation goals.
- [Highly Erodible Lands Initiative \(HELI\)](#): Producers and landowners can enroll in CRP to establish long-term cover on highly erodible cropland that has a weighted erodibility index (EI) greater than or equal to 20.
- [Farmable Wetlands Program](#): Producers and landowners can enroll land in CRP to restore previously farmed wetlands and wetland buffers, improving both vegetation and water flow.
- [Clean Lake Estuaries and Rivers \(CLEAR\) Initiative and CLEAR30](#): This initiative prioritizes and offers additional incentives for water quality practices on the land that, if enrolled, will help reduce sediment loadings, nutrient loadings and harmful algal blooms. Through CLEAR30, a component of this initiative, these additional incentives for adoption of water quality practices can be accessed in 30-year contracts.

[Find out more about these programs.](#)

2/28 2:00-3:00 - Effectiveness of Nutrient Management for Reducing Nutrient Losses from Agricultural Fields

Nutrients in agricultural areas are managed based on the 4Rs of nutrient stewardship: apply the right nutrient source, with the right rate, at the right time, in the right place. However, nutrient discharge is an ongoing environmental concern, and management practices for water quality improvements present many challenges

due to complex processes and mechanisms in nutrient cycling and other factors associated with agricultural conservation practices such as residue and tillage management.

This presentation will discuss two investigations focused on nitrogen (N) and phosphorus (P) and emphasizes the need for government agencies to work together to address potential economic losses due to implementation of lower fertilizer rates for water quality improvement. [Register](#). See other EPA [research webinars](#).

Supreme Court poop dispute could have big impact on Michigan environment

A legal fight about how to dispose of the manure generated by Michigan's largest livestock operations has reached Michigan's highest court, with potentially far-reaching implications for the state's ability to limit pollution of all kinds. The case comes as Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, and Canada struggle to address the agricultural pollution in lakes and rivers across the region and turns Lake Erie bright green with algae every summer. [Read the full story](#) by Michigan Public.

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

The EPA Water Finance Clearinghouse has learning modules to help homeowners.

Please forward this information on to your residents.

- The Private Drinking Water Wells learning module is [for homeowners who are seeking information to support the operations & maintenance of existing private wells](#) or the construction of new systems.
- The [Financing Septic Systems learning module is for homeowners](#) seeking information to support the operations and maintenance, repair, or new construction of septic systems.