



Cayuga Lake Watershed Intermunicipal Organization (CWIO)

Wednesday, November 15, 2023

Held by zoom

Minutes

Members, Associate Members, and Ex-Officio Members Present:

VOTING MEMBERS AND ASSOCIATE MEMBERS	
Michael Boggs – Town of Ulysses	Gary Mutchler – Town of Scipio
Tony DelPlato – Village of Interlaken	Stephanie Redmond – Town of Enfield
Laurie Ervay – City of Ithaca	Dave Sprout – Town of Dryden
Roxy Johnston – Town of Catharine	Liz Thomas – Town of Ulysses
Margaret Johnson – Town of Ithaca	Isaac Walker – Watershed Manager
Shawn Murphy – ExOfficio – Cortland SWCD	Michele Wunderlich – Cayuga County
PARTNERS	
Doug Barnes – Tompkins Health	Noah Marks - CSI

Agenda Item 1: Call to order

Agenda Item 2: Resolution to approve minutes and monthly financial report

RESOLVED that the CWIO approves the minutes of their 10/25/23 meeting and accepts the financial report ending 10/31/23 with a balance of \$260,363.57.

Moved by Liz Thomas and seconded by Roxy Johnston. Vote: unanimous in favor.

Agenda item 3: Watershed Manager – Isaac Walker

While Mr. Walker does not officially begin work for CWIO until 11/27/23, he attended the November CWIO meeting to introduce himself and give a bit of his background. He has moved to the area from Susquehanna County, Pennsylvania, specifically Dimock where he grew up on a small livestock farm. He has a degree in Environmental Science with a minor in Watershed Management from Mansfield University.

Isaac will have an office at Hobart William Smith Colleges in Geneva at the Finger Lakes Institute where Ian Smith—Watershed Steward for Seneca Lake—also works. This will offer opportunities to work with the FLI and Ian on topics in common.

Agenda item 4: Organizational Actions for 2024

The organizational document in the agenda package is the same format that has been used in years past for CWIO and contains the budget, work plan, appointments, meeting dates, administrative structure, etc. CWIO reviewed the document and decided to move ahead with a portion of the resolutions, especially the ones regarding leadership of CWIO which must change in 2024 per the bylaws. See the [organizational document](#) on the CWIO website for the resolutions that were passed at this meeting.

Agenda item 5: Salt Mine – proposed legislation

The safety of the salt mine located under the southern half of Cayuga Lake has become a growing concern after Cargill announced it is looking to sell the mine. When the mine was originally permitted, the state environmental permitting regulations were different than they are now, and the mine was

never required to have an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) which is more rigorous than what was used back when mining under Cayuga Lake began. There currently is no plan for how the mine will be closed when the salt supply is exhausted. Given the history of the salt mine collapse in 1994 of the Retsof Mine which contaminated the Genessee River with salt, many are increasingly concerned the same could occur here as mining is permitted closer and closer to the bed of Cayuga Lake.

The Legislature of Tompkins County, where the majority of the mine is located, approved a resolution on 11/8/23 asking for an updated environmental review, a higher bond, and a closure plan.

Senator Lea Webb has [introduced state legislation](#) supported by Assemblywoman Anna Kelles which

- requires such permits to be subject to environmental quality review procedures; (a more rigorous process than current)
- requires financial security to cover any damages directly or indirectly resulting from salt mining activities beneath a lake, including, but not limited to, those resulting from collapse or water contamination.
- limits the time a permit or consent by OGS remains in place.

Agenda item 5: Chair and Executive Committee Report – Liz Thomas

- Response to the state draft of the Owasco Watershed Rules and Regulations (WRR) has been active but there are no final decisions on next steps yet. At their 11/20/23 meeting, the Tompkins County Water Resources Council will consider submitting a letter regarding the state’s decisions on the Owasco WRRs and what that means for all potential WRR updates across the state.
- Members of the Executive Committee are helping orient Isaac as he moves into the Watershed Manager position.
- The Ithaca Reservoir Stream Restoration and Sediment Reduction Project started with help from Ian Smith then Erin Norris has completed the draft engineering feasibility study needed before an application can be submitted for implementation funding.
- Finger Lakes Grant –CWIO, CLWN¹, CSI² and CNYRPDB³ worked jointly to submit a grant application to visualize data on Cayuga Lake. Unfortunately, the grant was not funded. [See the funded projects.](#) We hope this funding stream continues.

Agenda item 6: Committees

a. Executive Committee – see chair report

b. Education, Public Participation and Outreach Committee (EPPOC) –

EPPOC’s recommendations for communications in 2024 are to:

- Continue the aggregation of water news to share and connect watershed efforts;
- Update the “Resources” page of the CWIO website;
- Assist to coordinate training and education regional to increase impacts of this work and make more efficient use of limited staff and resources;

¹ Cayuga Lake Watershed Network

² Community Science Institute

³ Central New York Regional Planning and Development Board

- Develop a list of speakers to hear from in 2024.
- c. Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)
- d. State Outreach –
- This committee continues to engage with others and look into a lobby day in Albany using the [CWIO approved recommendations](#).

Agenda item 7: Reports from Partners

Seneca County

Soil and Water Conservation District work: SWCD received a CRF 7 grant for Cover Cropping and Soil Health. In addition, they partnered with Cayuga County SWCD on 2 other CRF 7 applications, one for manure storage and another for cover crops. Unfortunately, the Cover Crop application was the only one that was funded. So, in total 2 CRF 7 grants for cover crops were awarded.

Cayuga County

- **Planning:**
 - Cayuga County is funding the HAB’s monitoring program on Cayuga Lake, the Cayuga Lake tributary monitoring program and the Owasco Lake buoy using County funding. They are funding the Owasco Lake tributary monitoring program and the Owasco Lake buoy database using FLOWPA (Finger Lakes Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance) funds.
 - Have opened a GIS position.
- **WQMA work:**
 - Cayuga County Planning – has opened a GIS position.
 - Held Cover Crop field day on 1/17
 - Wrote and distributed the [September newsletter](#)
- **SWCD work:**
 - Doug Kierst reported that they have finished harvesting Cross Lake and are putting the boats away. He reported that he received two Ag Non-Point Source grant awards totaling ~\$600,000 in grant funds. They are finishing up hydroseeding, closing out grants and stabilizing a fire lane.
 - Joint work with **Seneca County SWCD (report above)**.
- **Department of Health**
 - Ani Fish reported that harmful algal bloom (HABs) activity in Owasco Lake is not affecting the intakes much. She reported that they have received a number of New York State’s Septic System Replacement Fund applications for lakefront areas and are installing funded ones.
 - She reported that there has been a lot of HAB action in the east side of Cayuga Lake.

Cortland County – Soil and Water Conservation District

- \$16 million of state funding was recently announced for Climate Resilient Farms. Cortland County SWCD was successful with all 6 grant proposals they submitted.

Tompkins County – Soil and Water Conservation District –

- \$734,790 - work with a dairy farm to install a manure storage cover and flare system.
- \$166,390 - work with crop producers to implement ponds for control and collection of excess surface water during high rain events and wet conditions.

Community Science Institute – Grascen Shidemantle

- CSI held a very successful “data jam” on 11/3 for 30 participants to better understand the CSI database.
- They are grateful their funding for monitoring from Cayuga County is in the budget for 2024.

CLEAN

- CLEAN launched a petition to ask the state for more rigorous environmental oversight and protections for the lake which is over the top of the mine. They will send a letter to the governor soon which is associated with the petition. They have also asked to meet with DEC Director of Region 7, Dereth Glance, to talk about their concerns.

Municipalities

- The town of Enfield is moving its comprehensive water protection plan forward. It has been submitted to the state. If approved, the plan recommendations will be added to site plan review.

Agenda Item 8: adjourn. Roxy Johnston made a motion to adjourn.

Submitted by Liz Thomas