



A clean lake reflects well  
on all of us.

**(final)**  
**ONONDAGA LAKE PARTNERSHIP (OLP)**  
**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**  
**November 30, 2010**

**ATTENDEES**

**Committee Members Present:**

Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Stephen H. Bales, Commander, USACE, Buffalo District (vtc)  
Mr. Seth Ausubel, USEPA, Region 2 (vtc)  
Mr. Kenneth Lynch, Regional Director, NYSDEC, Region 7  
Mr. Charles Silver, Environmental Scientist, NYS Office of the Attorney General (tc)  
Mr. Andrew Maxwell, Director of Planning and Sustainability, City of Syracuse  
Mr. David Coburn, Director, Onondaga County Office of the Environment

**Others In Attendance:**

Mr. Bj Adigun, Chair, Outreach Committee Chair  
Mr. Chris Dere, USEPA, Region 2, Project & Outreach Committees (vtc)  
Mrs. Julie Gorecki, USACE, Buffalo District (vtc)  
Ms. Lynn Greer, USACE, Buffalo District, Outreach Committee (vtc)  
Ms. Mary Jane Peachey, Chair, Project Committee  
Mr. Steven Vriesen, USACE, Buffalo District, Project Committee (vtc)  
Mr. Joe Heath, Onondaga Nation  
Ms. Thane Joyal, Onondaga Nation  
Ms. Grace Musumeci, Chief, Environmental Review Section, USEPA, Region 2 (vtc)  
Ms. Janice Whitney, Indigenous Program, USEPA, Region 2 (vtc)

**Committee Members Absent:**

None

**MEETING ARRANGEMENTS:** The meeting was held on Tuesday, November 30, 2010 at 10:00 a.m. at the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Office in Syracuse, New York.

**1. OPENING REMARKS:** LTC Bales welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**2. EXECUTIVE SESSION:** An executive session was not deemed necessary for this meeting.

### 3. ADMINISTRATIVE:

**a. Review October 4, 2010 Meeting Minutes:** A Motion to approve the October 4, 2010 meeting minutes as amended was moved by Mr. Lynch, seconded by LTC Bales, and approved with 5 Ayes and 1 abstention (Mr. Coburn).

**b. Action Items:** Action Items E10-3 through E10-8 were reviewed and remain ongoing.

**c. Correspondence:** Mrs. Gorecki reported that there has not been any correspondence received by USACE through November 29, 2010. However, LTC Bales received a letter on November 29, 2010 from SUNY Oswego students requesting information on what the partnership in particular is doing to improve the lake's water quality. A response was sent on November 30, 2010 addressing the improvements made to the lake in the past ten years and citing reference to the recently published Onondaga Lake Watershed Progress Assessment and Action Strategies (OLWPAAS) document. The other partners did not report any incoming nor outgoing correspondence for this timeframe.

**d. FFY2011 Executive Committee Objectives:** Mr. Vriesen stated that review of the Executive Committee objectives have been added as a standing Agenda item to ensure they are tracked continuously.

### 4. STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS:

**a. Outreach Committee Update:** Mr. Adigun briefed the partners on the Outreach Committee's progress.

At their last meeting on November 17, 2010 the committee continued their discussion on the plan to accomplish all the tasks budgeted for by December 31, 2010. Highlights from that meeting include:

- **Interpretive signs:** The bulk of the Outreach Committee's budget will be spent on the interpretive signs. Mr. Adigun is working with the Onondaga County Parks Department on the contractual process, however if the contract requires County Legislature approval or needs to be put out for bids, the funds may not be expended until January of 2011. Mr. Adigun is working with Onondaga Environmental Institute (OEI) to obligate the funds as expeditiously as possible. Mr. Adigun thanked OEI for working hard to accommodate the committee's needs. The County Parks staff recommended that the signs be installed in the Spring of 2011 as part of the county's Master Plan. Mr. Adigun requested that the partners approve an extension for the expenditure of the funds and the installation plan after December 2010. Mr. Coburn added that since the park is not heavily used in the winter time it would seem reasonable to wait until the spring to install the signs. LTC Bales agreed to the installation of the signs in the spring, understanding that all involved want the signs to be installed correctly vs. quickly. Mr. Ausubel added that he agreed as the Outreach Committee is following through with the directives from the Executive Committee to produce sustainable products. LTC Bales requested to see samples of the design of the interpretive signs at the next Executive Committee meeting.

**ACTION ITEM:** Ms. Greer agreed to submit copies of the draft interpretive signs for review at the next Executive Committee meeting.

- **Watershed Signs:** The content and layout of the watershed signs have been approved by the county and city. The Outreach Committee is awaiting word on the installation.

- **Community Forum:** Ms. Speer recommended to the OLP that the Outreach Committee organize a community forum for interested parties and for groups that are users of Onondaga Lake and the creek. Ms. Speer has provided a list of contacts to the committee. The committee is planning to hold a forum in early March 2011. The forum will enable attendees to provide feedback on the OLP statement issued on contact recreation among other topics. The partners agreed that a face to face venue would be more beneficial. Local stakeholder groups, state and county experts and the County Health Department will be invited. Mr. Lynch offered to check with the New York State Health Department about their participation.

- **Outreach Committee Budget:** Mr. Adigun will present the 2011 Outreach Committee plan by the end of December 2010 per Action Item E10-7. The partners were in agreement with Mr. Adigun's request.

**b. Project Committee Update:** Ms. Peachey reported on the Project Committee's November 18, 2010 meeting. The following are highlights from that meeting.

- **Lake Model Collaboration:** The peer review panel's response to the plunging inflows study technical memorandum was received. The phosphorus bioavailability study technical memorandum has been sent to the peer review panel. There seems to be a difference of opinion between UFI and Anchor QEA regarding the sediment flux study and how the results are incorporated into the model. Mr. Coburn expects a response in a couple of weeks.

Mr. Ausubel urged the County to either come to agreement on the sediment flux study or submit the memorandum as it is for the peer review panel to resolve as schedules are tight. Mr. Coburn stated that UFI and Anchor QEA are meeting this week to develop the memorandum for submittal to the peer review panel.

- **Microbial Trackdown Study:** NYSDEC has received the latest report on Phase 1 of the Microbial Trackdown Study. They are planning to move forward with Phase 2 in the spring using EPA grant funds.

- **Mudboils:** Mr. Kappel provided an update on a newly formed mudboil and reported substantial subsidence in the rogue mudboil area and in Onondaga Creek.

Mr. Kappel also reported that, due to extensive NYSDEC well closure requirements, there could be significant costs associated with closing the NYSDEC permitted wells. Ms. Peachey agreed to meet with the Division of Minerals to discuss closure requirements for the permitted wells.

- **Project of the Month:** The committee reviewed the EPA funded projects in depth in this allotted timeframe and made preliminary recommendations to reallocate unused funds if necessary.

- **Project Committee Vacancies:** Mr. Esposito announced that he will retire from his position with the City of Syracuse effective 30 December 2010. Mr. Esposito is the City of Syracuse Project Committee representative, a partner agency, on the OLP. Mr. Esposito has been a dedicated member of the Project Committee for many years and will be missed. Mr. Maxwell stated Mayor Miner will appoint a replacement for Mr. Esposito.

Ms. Peachey also announced that Mrs. Edwards, a NYSDEC Superfund representative on the Project Committee, has accepted another position within NYSDEC and will no longer be working on Onondaga Lake issues.

There has been no response to date on whether the NYS Canal Corporation will appoint a replacement for Mr. Eidt on the Project Committee. LTC Bales asked how long has the vacancy existed and Ms. Peachey replied that Mr. Eidt's seat has been vacant for three months. LTC Bales added that if a representative has not been appointed by January 2011, the OLP will formally send a letter of interest to the Canal Corporation. Ms. Peachey agreed to follow up on this action.

## 5. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

**a. Mudboils Update:** Mr. Lynch updated the partners on the recent consent order signed by NYSDEC and Honeywell on November 5, 2010. Included in this order is the capping of Wastebeds 9-15 as well as an Environmental Benefit Project of up to \$250,000 per year for five years to develop a long term solution for the mudboils. NYSDEC is required to enter into a Memorandum of Agreement with Honeywell that will detail to whom and how much money is allocated. Given that the USEPA funds for the mudboils will expire in 2012, the OLP has some time to recommend a plan on how to spend the funds. In the plan the OLP will look at impacts to Onondaga Creek. The partners discussed continuing with the existing program for the mudboils or taking the opportunity to look at the issue with a new perspective within the context of EPA's NEPA requirements. A proposal to divert Onondaga Creek may be considered along with other alternatives. There are many questions for the OLP to address. It was suggested to use EPA funds to close out the wells and use the new funds to look at mitigation of the mudboils. This order provides a great opportunity for the OLP to develop an approach that will have big impacts on the creek. It was also suggested to formalize an ad hoc group to discuss mudboil issues and the new program.

Mr. Kappel is developing cost estimates to close the wells and once those costs have been communicated the OLP can decide on whether to close those wells that are not productive and keep other wells active. Mr. Lynch was asked if the NYSDEC has the flexibility to time the implementation of the funds and he replied that there may be some flexibility in deciding when the money is needed and who will receive it.

Mr. Coburn added that early on, the Project Committee suggested creating a trust to maintain the mudboils into perpetuity, and asked if that could be an option. Mr. Lynch replied that it may be an option but further discussion will be needed. Ms. Peachey added that the OLP does not know what the problem is that they are trying to fix regarding the mudboil issues. Additional data is required to determine the path forward.

LTC Bales suggested revising some of the Project Committee objectives for FFY2011 to be more project oriented. He suggested developing objectives to determine the true impact of sediment to the creek and lake and to define the annual mudboil program and the associated projects. Mr. Lynch stated it would be a first step but questioned whether the entire Project Committee would have a good understanding of the mudboil issues. Another consideration is to ensure involving outside participants and the Onondaga Nation. LTC Bales welcomed as many stakeholders as possible to the table within reason. Mr. Ausubel suggested establishing an ad hoc group as a starting point in moving forward. He also suggested asking the Project Committee to provide recommendations for an ad hoc group and add parties as necessary. Once the recommendation is finalized, the Project Committee will bring back their recommendation to the Executive Committee.

**ACTION ITEM:** The Project Committee will re-look at their objectives for FFY2011 with an eye toward recommending mitigation strategy for the mudboil issues and to submit a plan to use the existing USEPA funds set aside for mudboil remediation, maintenance and monitoring.

Ms. Joyal referenced the meeting held by Mr. Bill Butler of USACE to discuss Onondaga Creek issues. At this meeting discussions included how to involve others, how to move forward recognizing USEPA's NEPA requirements and how the state regulates mudboil issues. Mr. Ausubel added that although EPA is the lead agency in funding the mudboils and engaged in the formal NEPA process, the new funding as part of the consent order changes the picture with the state now in control. EPA desires to move forward and will continue to communicate with NYSDEC and USACE and bring any new developments back to the OLP and the stakeholders. LTC Bales stated that it is important to have one voice even though partner agencies are moving in parallel paths. Mr. Lynch will schedule a telecom with NYSDEC, EPA, and USACE to ensure all parties are moving forward in the same direction. Mr. Heath added that the Onondaga Nation is torn over the decision to have a creek free of sediment and the extreme remedy of moving the creek that may not do much. A long term solution for the mudboil phenomenon is needed.

**b. OLP EPA Budget:** Mr. Ausubel referenced the revised EPA FFY2004-05-06 CCWI Grant spreadsheet. The standing committees and OEI were asked to review their budgets to identify any unallocated funds. Both standing committees devoted time in their respective Agendas to discuss potential projects or line items that may have unallocated funds. The budget shortfall was \$108,738.92. However, due to a revised proposal submitted by OEI, the shortfall was reduced to \$39,638.92. This lower number is much less critical and achievable.

The OLP is still facing challenges with the cost of closing wells or keeping some and at what cost. Answers to these questions may not be resolved until the end of 2011. Mr. Ausubel recommended keeping the current balance of \$150k in place for the mudboil program until a decision has been made. OEI's revised proposal is awaiting a recommendation for approval by the Project Committee.

Ms. Peachey reported that the Onondaga County Soil and Water Conservation District identified a \$10,000 budget reduction that they could make to their program. However, noting that the Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) program provides a direct environmental benefit, as well as leveraging additional funds, the Project Committee would

prefer not to reduce their budget as a first step. The committee also identified the Peer Review Panel and another potential source of funds which will be known over the next 60-90 days. The committee recommended suspending their decision until all peer review panel expenditures are known before reducing other budget lines.

## **6. NEW BUSINESS:**

**a. FFY2011 Project Committee Objectives:** LTC Bales asked Ms. Peachey to go back and revise the Project Committee's objectives to be more focused and identify specific deliverables. Ms. Peachey agreed to go back to the Project Committee to explain the request.

**b. NYSDEC/Honeywell Consent Order:** Ms. Peachey explained that Consent Order also included up to \$150k to fund a paleolimnological study to determine prehistoric levels of phosphorus and dissolved oxygen to support setting water quality goals for the lake.

## **7. OTHER BUSINESS:**

LTC Bales informed the partners that USACE has funding to attend OLP meetings through the end of March 2011. There are no current earmarks for FFY2011 for OLP funding. USACE is actively pursuing other options to continue participation in the partnership. The proposed legislation put forth by Senator Gillibrand would have impacts on USACE's participation and the existing makeup of the OLP if passed.

**8. Issues:** None.

**9. PUBLIC COMMENT:** None.

**10. FUTURE MEETINGS:** The next OLP Executive Committee meeting will be scheduled via Doodle.

**11. ADJOURNMENT:** The meeting was adjourned at 11:45 a.m. LTC Bales wished everyone a happy and safe holiday season.

Number	Date of Origin	Due Date	Action Officer	Tasking	Status
E10-3	13-Apr-10	Ongoing	NYSDEC	Project Committee will review OLP projects funded by USEPA grants to ensure completion by September 30, 2012 and recommend agencies to leverage ongoing projects.	Ongoing
E10-4	13-Apr-10	Ongoing	Onondaga County	Outreach Committee is directed to reassess their 2010-11 outreach plan and budget as a close-out strategy to complete tasks to carry on outreach.	Ongoing
E10-6	15-Jun-10	Ongoing	USEPA	Mr. Ausubel/Dere to provide any updates or new information for the USEPA grant budget standing Agenda item to Mr. Vriesen.	Ongoing
E10-7	04-Oct-10	31-Dec-10	Outreach Cmte NYSDEC	Project and Outreach Committees will provide a balanced budget for EPA-funded projects by the end of December 2010.	Ongoing
E10-8	04-Oct-10	30-Dec-10	Outreach Cmte	Provide a budget for a 2011 outreach program to the Executive Committee.	Ongoing
E10-9	30-Nov-10	Jan-11	Ms. Greer	Provide draft of interpretive signs to Executive Committee for review	Ongoing
E10-10	30-Nov-10	Jan-11	Ms. Peachey	Revise FFY2011 Project Cmte objectives to reflect a more product oriented list.	Ongoing