

Onondaga  
Environmental  
Institute

# permanent habitat module

littoral zone improvement  
wetland connection projects

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## Permanent Habitat Module



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The goal of this series of projects was to enhance habitat in the littoral zone of Onondaga Lake to improve spawning and nursery conditions for many species of fish. A healthy littoral zone and fishery typically attracts interesting wildlife including waterfowl, wading birds (such as the great blue heron), fish-eating raptors (such as the osprey and bald eagle), and fish-eating mammals (such as the otter). Historically, Onondaga Lake biota have been adversely affected by a combination of factors, including severely degraded habitat. OEI coordinated a team of Onondaga Lake experts from academia and research institutions to make recommendations and monitor effects of constructed improvements. Improved connections to existing wetlands and structural stabilization of light-weight "oncolite" sediment (a residue from industrial processes) were indicated as priority tasks based on a successful demonstration project. Comprehensive monitoring (both pre- and post-construction) of the habitat structures included macrophytes, macroinvertebrates, water chemistry, and fish. While lakewide littoral zone improvements have occurred due to reduced municipal inputs, the extensive baseline knowledge acquired by OEI habitat team members during these projects continues to prove valuable in ongoing habitat improvement efforts. Several team members are currently active in habitat improvement efforts associated with the Onondaga Lake Bottom Superfund site cleanup and other lake issues.

Habitat improvement in Onondaga Lake and adjacent lands is a priority of the Onondaga Lake Partnership (OLP) (formerly, the Onondaga Lake Management Conference (OLMC)), US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC), and the Onondaga Nation. It is a principal element of the Onondaga Lake Management Plan (OLMP), which was developed under the OLMC and is the technical guiding document for OLP initiatives. OEI facilitated a series of pioneering habitat enhancement projects including research, planning, demonstration, and construction. OEI's projects in and near Onondaga Lake have proven to be catalysts for progressively more intensive research and planning efforts toward the common goal of effective and permanent habitat improvements.

The final report is a composite of reports generated for OEI by experts from SUNY-ESF, Syracuse University, Upstate Freshwater Institute, SUNY-Cortland, Mississippi State University, and other institutions.

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