ONONDAGA LAKE PARTNERSHIP

REFLECTIONS

A clean lake reflects well on all of us.

VOL II, ISSUE 4 WINTER 2005/2006 A QUARTERLY UPDATE FROM THE ONONDAGA LAKE PARTNERSHIP

WORLD WATER MONITORING DAY

CENTRAL NY HIGH SCHOOLS CELEBRATE WORLD WATER MONITORING DAY

Fowler High School teacher Joe Boroncyk with his students at the World Water Monitoring Day event.

Annually on October 18, World Water Monitoring Day is celebrated internationally. Volunteer water monitors, water agency professionals, students and the general public take to their local streams, lakes, wetlands and bays to test water quality.

The Onondaga Lake Partnership (OLP) sponsored its fourth Annual World Water Monitoring Day event on October 5, 2005. Over 100 high school students from West Genesee, Fowler, Jamesville-DeWitt, and East Syracuse Central, directly participated in water sampling activities along the stream bank of Onondaga Creek (U.S. Geological Survey's gauging station at Dorwin Avenue).

The goal was to educate students about the importance of water quality and aquatic species protection. Student teams were directed to conduct tests

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THE ONONDAGA LAKE PARTNERSHIP (OLP)

Promotes cooperation among federal, state, and local governments, and other involved parties in the management of the environmental issues of Onondaga Lake and the Onondaga Lake watershed in the Syracuse, New York area.

OLP REFLECTS ON YEAR'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS AT ANNUAL PROGRESS MEETING

Community members gathered recently to learn about strides the Onondaga Lake Partnership (OLP) has made in the past year. "Reflecting Our Progress and Potential" was the theme for the OLP's Annual Progress Meeting held Wednesday, November 2, in the Art and Home Center at the New York State Fairgrounds.

The evening's program reflected a year of varied accomplishments and the desire to gain feedback from the meeting's attendees. The "Year in Review" video highlighted the Onondaga County phosphorous removal facility which started operating this past spring, a 2005 mini grant recipient for a rain garden funded through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's Lake Bottom Plan, an update on the Onondaga Creek Revitalization Plan and the Carp Fishing Weekend in June.

Thanks to the dedicated effort of Congressman James T. Walsh, approximately $146 million in federal funding has been allocated to various lake improvement projects. Signs of improvement are particularly noticeable in the water quality as many of the Amended Consent Judgment (ACJ) projects have been completed well ahead of schedule. The latest sewer separation project, for example, on the west side of Syracuse,

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HIGH SCHOOLS CELEBRATE WORLD WATER MONITORING DAY *continued from page 1*

Bill Kappel of U.S. Geological Survey teaches Fowler High School student about water quality testing analysis.

for parameters such as pH, temperature, dissolved oxygen and turbidity. They also engaged in lessons on local macroinvertebrate and fish species characteristics. Students learned the science behind water quality monitoring and assessment through demonstrations and interactions. The monitoring data the students collected was recorded and inserted into the national database for World Water Monitoring Day at www.worldwatermonitoringday.org. Volunteer monitoring data supplements professional assessments and assists watershed managers in tracking general watershed quality trends.

Volunteers made this event possible through their commitment to environmental education and outreach. We truly appreciated the collaboration of volunteers from U.S. Geological Survey, Environmental Protection Agency, Army Corps of Engineers, NY State Department of Environmental Conservation, Onondaga County, Central NY Regional Planning Board, Upstate Freshwater Institute and Onondaga Lake Cleanup Corp.

The OLP hosts this event annually in early October. We encourage students and the public to become involved. For more information, please contact Dr. Ed Michalenko at Onondaga Lake Cleanup Corp., (315) 472-2150 or emmonon@verizon.net. ■

Mike Spada of Upstate Freshwater Institute demonstrates equipment and techniques for the macroinvertebrate lesson.

PROGRESS MEETING *continued from page 1*

will make major improvements in reducing basement flooding and sewage overflows.

During the OLP Progress Meeting, the 2005 mini grant recipients gave a brief overview on the status of their projects. The mini grant program encourages community-based stewardship projects in support of the lake's cleanup efforts. The 2006 mini grant program is open to applications through December 15, 2005. Applicants may request up to $5,000 for projects that contribute to the rehabilitation of Onondaga Lake and its watershed. More information and a mini grant application can be found on the OLP website, www.onlakepartners.org.

Dan Cummings, anchor for WSYR, News Channel 9 in Syracuse, moderated the question and answer segment of the evening where the public was able to express their concerns and seek further information from the panel of experts.

Finally, nine lucky photo contest winners were awarded cash prizes, zoo and Lights-on-the-Lake passes for participating in the OLP amateur photo contest. See page 8 and future Reflections for winners. ■

"2005 Year in Review" and "2005 Progress Meeting" DVDs are available free.

Please request by email at info@onlakepartners.org or call 1-800- 833-6390.

2005 CONSERVATION TOUR EXHIBITS BEST PRACTICES ON LOCAL FARMS

by Jeffrey Carmichael, Executive Director, Onondaga County Soil and Water Conservation District

Royal Acres Farm before and after implementing several Best Management Practices (BMPS).

The Onondaga County Soil and Water Conservation District hosted its 15th annual Conservation Tour on Friday, September 30. The tour gives farmers, public officials and interested citizens an opportunity to see how the District is working with local farmers to implement best management practices (BMPs) on farms to help protect water quality.

This year's tour started with a visit to Royal Acres Farm, a dairy farm in the Onondaga Lake watershed. This farm is participating in the District's Onondaga Lake Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) program that is sponsored by the Onondaga Lake Partnership. Royal Acres Farm has been working with the District the past few years to implement several BMPs on the farm including barnyard runoff management, milking center waste water treatment, erosion and sediment control, and access roads. These improvements to the Royal Acres Farm will reduce soil erosion from the farm, and prevent manure and nutrients from entering Onondaga Creek.

The second stop on the tour was the Ameslea Dairy Farm in the Oneida Lake watershed. Staff from the District, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Farm Service Agency (FSA) described several conservation projects being planned and implemented at this farm. The Ameslea Farm is participating in the Oneida Lake Watershed AEM Program and will be working with the District to develop a Tier 3 AEM plan that will outline various water quality projects needed for the farm.

In addition, a grazing system was being installed at the farm through Graze NY, which is a program funded through Congressman James T. Walsh. Another project being implemented was a streambank stabilization project through a grant sponsored by the Great Lakes Commission and the State Environmental Protection Fund. Finally, the Ameslea Farm is participating in the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, through the FSA, which will allow this farm to fence animals out of a stream, install a buffer and provide an alternative water source.

The third tour stop was Barbland Farms, Inc., in the Upper Tioughnioga watershed. Barbland Farms is participating in the AEM program and two BMPs were visited including manure storage and silage leachate control. These BMPs will help protect groundwater and surface water quality at the farm. Funding for these projects came from the Environmental Quality Incentive Program via NRCS, the New York State Environmental Protection Fund and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

At the conclusion of the farm visits, the tour went to the Skyline Lodge at Highland Forest Park for lunch. Tour participants were able to enjoy a spectacular view from Skyline Lodge. Ron Kaplewicz, executive director for the State Soil and Water Conservation Committee, talked about how the State Committee and Soil and Water Conservation Districts are working together to implement conservation through various programs and opportunities.

The final part of the tour was the presentation of the

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FOURTH ANNUAL ONONDAGA CREEK CLEAN-UP IS BEST YET

Amy Samuels, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Onondaga County

Volunteers haul junk from creek.

Mother Nature shined at the fourth annual Onondaga Creek Clean-up held Saturday, September 10 and 17. Not only were volunteers able to get into the creek to remove debris, the water was so low, that previously unreachable items were exposed and able to be removed. Below are some highlights:

- Eighty volunteers removed almost three dumpster loads of debris including dozens of bicycles, several sign posts, many tires, a few skateboards, too much clothing to count, lots of metal pipes, one bowling ball, a wallet, a television, a computer monitor and a lot of what could only be called junk.
- The volunteers used about 20 canoes, one trash barge, 120 pairs of gloves and a whole lot of muscle power to haul all the trash. Fueling the volunteers were a variety of refreshments, from doughnuts, cookies and pizza, to watermelon, vegetable sticks and humus.
- More than 15 businesses and organizations contributed to the success of the event. New this year, five organizations recruited volunteers including Inner City Rotary, Forty Below, the Dunbar Association, Starbucks and the Syracuse University Industrial Design Department.
- Cornell Cooperative Extension staff spent over 200 hours planning, publicizing, and hosting the event. Funding for a significant portion of the supplies was provided by the Onondaga Lake Partnership.

The following supporters generously donated goods, services and their precious time:

Byrne Dairy
Carousel Center
Citizen's Campaign for the Environment
City of Syracuse Department of Public Works
City of Syracuse Department of Parks & Recreation
Coca-Cola Bottling Co. of Syracuse
Dunbar Association
40 Below
Green Hills Inner City Rotary
Onondaga County Environmental Health Council
Onondaga Lake Partnership
Nick & Patti Pirro
Starbucks
Syracuse University Industrial Design Class
Wilcox Paper Co. ■

Young volunteers from the Dunbar Association help clean up Onondaga Creek.

2005 CONSERVATION TOUR *continued from page 3*

2005 Conservation Farm of the Year Award. Onondaga County Executive Nicholas J. Pirro presented this year's award to Rick and John Snavlin, who are the owners and operators of Snavlin Farms, LLC. This farm is located in the Onondaga Lake watershed and the Snavlins have participated in the AEM program for several years and are an excellent example of how to successfully integrate conservation into farming. Congratulations to Snavlin Farms, LLC.

The 2005 Conservation Tour was a great success and demonstrated how AEM is being effectively implemented in three watersheds through the combined efforts of different agencies and funding sources. ■

"SUMMER SCHOOL": LEARNING ABOUT ONONDAGA CREEK

Dr. Don Leopold, SUNY ESF, discusses wetlands with the Onondaga Creek Working Group on the West Branch of Onondaga Creek. (Photo credit: Stephanie Harrington)

Did you see a yellow school bus full of adults, driving the hills of the Onondaga Creek watershed this summer? Was it a continuing education class? Of a sort: the folks you saw just might have been the Onondaga Creek Working Group. The Working Group is part of a two and one-half year project called *The Onondaga Creek Conceptual Revitalization Plan* (OCRP). The OCRP project is sponsored by the Onondaga Lake Partnership (OLP) with funds from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The Onondaga Creek Working Group is a diverse group of people who live or work in the Onondaga Creek watershed. Members are from Syracuse, the Onondaga Nation, Lafayette and Tully. Members generously volunteer time to attend meetings, which are open to the public.

What will the Working Group do?

The Working Group is an informal community-based group that will produce recommendations for Onondaga Creek revitalization, based on technical information and public input. Participating in the Working Group involves challenging work, such as synthesizing detailed technical information about Onondaga Creek; in particular, hydrology, water quality, regulatory requirements, and flood control. The Working Group will consider varying opinions gathered from the community through a series of public forums and stakeholder meetings. These events will be held throughout the watershed as part of this project. Finally, the Working Group will produce a revitalization plan which is credible, and acceptable to the residents of the watershed. The revitalization plan will be available to the public and will be submitted to the OLP for review and approval.

Dr. Rick Smardon discusses constructed wetlands with the Onondaga Creek Working Group at the Meadowbrook stormwater detention basin, Syracuse. (Photo credit: Stephanie Harrington)

What did the Working Group see this summer?

That yellow school bus carried the Onondaga Creek Working Group through four field trips from May to October. This was the first phase of the Working Group: getting to know Onondaga Creek. The Working Group saw much of the Onondaga Creek watershed, from the headwaters near Tully to the outlet at the Syracuse Inner Harbor, connected to Onondaga Lake.

Many experts assisted the group with its study. Professors from the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry volunteered their time on most field trips. For example, the Working Group studied local stream ecology with Dr. Neil Ringler at Furnace Brook in Elmwood Park. Dr. Don Leopold joined the group to visit wetlands on the West Branch of Onondaga Creek. Glen Lewis, from Syracuse Department of Parks, Recreation and Youth met the Working Group in Lower Onondaga Park in Syracuse to discuss a design plan incorporating several parks and green spaces near Onondaga Creek. All in all, much was learned, as the group considers the possibilities for revitalization.

As winter settles in the Onondaga Creek watershed, the Working Group will move into their next phase: reviewing the state of Onondaga Creek. The Onondaga Creek Working Group meetings are open to the public. Dr. Rick Smardon chairs the Onondaga Creek Working Group. The next meeting is Wednesday, January 4, 2006, 5:30 p.m. For the meeting location and/or more information about the Onondaga Creek Working Group or the OCRP project, please contact Meredith Perreault at the Onondaga Lake Cleanup Corp., (315)472-2150, x4. ■

THE LANDSLIDES OF ONONDAGA LAKE WATERSHED

Aerial view of Rattlesnake Creek as it flows on to the valley floor along Tully Farms Road. Note how the stream now flows on either side of what used to be the channel of Rattlesnake Creek.

Remember the large landslide that occurred in the town of Lafayette in the spring of 1993? Few are aware that landslides occur nearly every year within the Onondaga Lake watershed, as well as across all of New York State. While most are not as dramatic as the 1993 landslide, these slides can change land contours, disrupt surface-water flow, alter ground-water levels, and modify the quality of water that ultimately flows to Onondaga Lake.

Landslides usually occur on steep slopes during the spring, when the ground is saturated from snowmelt and early spring rains. Trees and shrubs are usually not 'leafed-out', so groundwater that is normally absorbed by vegetation is unusually close to, if not flowing over, the ground surface. This excess water provides the 'grease' that assists blocks of earth to slip or flow downhill on steep hillsides. The more fine-grained lacustrine (lake-laid) glacial clay and silt a hillside soil contains, the more likely these saturated soils will fail, and move downslope. Soils with coarser sand and gravel do not flow as easily, but any slope can fail if the toe (base) of the slope is greatly eroded.

For example, a stream can erode into the toe of a hillside which can cause the slope to become over-steepened and fail, carrying soil, trees, roads, and even buildings downhill. Often this type of slide is small and may only affect an acre or so, but larger landslides can occur because of this process. Also, if a construction project excavates the toe of a steep hillside, over-steepening it, a landslide can also occur unless the toe of the slope is supported properly. Landslides can also occur during late autumn, when large amounts of precipitation fall over short periods and saturate a hillside, much like the situation in the early spring.

One of the results of Rattlesnake Gulf landslide, showing blocks of clay (not bedrock) which have slid into the channel of the creek, partially blocking the flow of the stream. Note person in upper right section of photo for scale.

The southern Onondaga Valley experienced two landslides within the last year. These landslides occurred in isolated locations, therefore few people know of their existence; but people became aware of them because the streams carried massive amounts of sediment down to the valley floor blocking bridge openings and flooding adjacent farm fields. In autumn 2004, excess rainfall and runoff from several tropical storms, resulted in over-saturated soil conditions on the upper slopes of Rainbow Creek, between Interstate-81 and U.S. Route 11A in the Tully Valley. A 1,000 foot long section of hillside collapsed into the creek channel from the eroded toe of a steep hillside. On the opposite side of the stream channel, another shorter section of hillside also collapsed. Most of the hillside was sand and gravel, and much of this sediment traveled rapidly downstream and eventually clogged two 6-foot culverts under Route 11A. Hundreds of truck loads of gravel had to be removed from the channel to allow the culverts to function properly and to prevent flooding of nearby property.

In April 2005, rapid snowmelt, followed by several days of persistent rain caused flooding problems throughout central and southern New York State. While the volume of flow measured in Onondaga Creek was not as great as that measured the past fall, there was enough water to cause a 1,200-foot section of the hillside in the middle reach of Rattlesnake Gulf to fail. Unlike the Creek Rainbow landslide, the Rattlesnake soils were almost entirely clay and silt over bedrock. There were a number of streams flowing off the upper slopes into the landslide area, thereby saturating the entire soil column. As the hillside gave away, large masses of clay, the size of homes slid into the bedrock

LANDSLIDES OF ONONDAGA LAKE WATERSHED *continued from page 6*

ravine, blocking the stream and causing massive amounts of sediment to flow downstream to Tully Farms Road. Not unlike Rainbow Creek, when the stream reached the valley floor, the sediment load was 'dropped' at the foot of the hillside. These sediments were removed from the area around the bridge, but downstream, the sediment forced the stream to abandon its channel and inundate several farm fields with water, and sand and gravel deposits.

Landslides are part of the natural erosion process—in this case taking what is high on the hillsides and depositing the eroded material on to the valley floor and into the streams. To minimize impacts to homes, farms, roads, and landscape, solutions are limited by the amount of funding available to implement sediment retention and removal actions. While funding can enhance road maintenance by capturing and removing sediment that flows to the valley floor, Mother Nature controls the physical processes of remodeling the landscape. We must learn to live with this ever-changing landscape within the Onondaga Lake Watershed. ■

Onondaga Lake Partnership logo for Lights on the Lake.

Lights on the Lake Kicks Off November 22

The annual holiday light show extravaganza, "Lights on the Lake", runs November 22, 2005 through January 8, 2006, 5-10 p.m. This is a two-mile long drive near Onondaga Lake through themed sections with a memorable grand finale. The Onondaga Lake Partnership display will be back up for its second year in the "Under the Sea" section near the marina. On November 21, the Onondaga County Parks Department sponsored a "Walk through Lights on the Lake" for the entire community. Check www.lightsonthelake.com for prices and additional details. ■

FISHERIES SUB-COMMITTEE PROMOTES SPORTS FISHING


A family enjoying participation in recent Carp Fishing Tournament.

Last year, the Onondaga Lake Partnership's Outreach Committee organized a roundtable discussion on "Fisheries in Onondaga Lake." The result of that workshop was the establishment of a Fisheries Subcommittee. One of the subcommittee's objectives was to improve awareness of the lake's sport fishing potential. Recent results from fishing tournaments together with information gathered by government and private agencies showed that Onondaga Lake has fish, and plenty of them. Many are prized species such as big bass, walleyes and trout.

But one aspect of the lake's fishing resource has been ignored, according to the sub-committee: The lake is also filled with lots of big carp. Tournament Carp Fishing in Europe has been big for years and has recently arrived in the U.S. "We felt we could be at the beginning of a world recognized activity—right here at Onondaga Lake," said sub-committee member Conrad Strozik.

The OLP mini grant received this year by the Izaak Walton League local chapter was used to advance the sub-committee's mission. They commissioned a local artist to produce educational material to introduce the history of carp and the fishing methods used. The artist, Peter Thompson, is also a writer, sportsman, guide and instructor. Thompson is creating a six-panel exhibit. The first panel describes a brief history of carp and its movement across the world. The second shows full-color illustrations of various carp species. A third panel will illustrate carp habits and habitats. Three other panels will describe fishing methods with emphasis on catch and release. They are fly fishing, spin fishing and conventional spool casting. Each panel will describe and show actual rod, reel, line and terminal tackle.

A first annual carp fishing tournament was held on Onondaga Lake last June with plans for another in 2006. ■

COMMITTEE INFORMATION

This newsletter is published by the Onondaga Lake Partnership with funding provided by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Executive Committee Members
Chaired by U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
- New York State Attorney General
- Onondaga County
- City of Syracuse

Project Committee Members
Chaired by New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

Representatives of Executive Committee agencies, as well as:

- Syracuse Department of Public Works
- U.S. Geological Survey
- Onondaga County Soil and Water Conservation District
- Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Central New York Regional Planning and Development Board
- Metropolitan Development Association

Outreach Committee Members
Chaired by U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Representatives of Executive Committee agencies, as well as:

- Izaak Walton League
- Atlantic States Legal Foundation
- League of Women Voters
- Cornell Cooperative Extension of Onondaga County
- State University of New York — College of Environmental Science & Forestry
- Onondaga Historical Association

The Executive Committee establishes and maintains the mission of the partnership and the lake improvement effort.

The Project Committee serves as the partnership technical center of expertise on specific projects and develops and maintains the funding strategy for projects.

The Outreach Committee works to enhance public knowledge and understanding of the partnership and the status of the lake improvement effort.

You can contact the Onondaga Lake Partnership at:

1-800-833-6390
info@onlakepartners.org

For more information, visit the Onondaga Lake Partnership web site at www.onlakepartners.org

4TH ANNUAL PHOTO CONTEST EXHIBITS FINE LOCAL TALENT

The Onondaga Lake Partnership's (OLP) fourth amateur photo contest was, once again, a resounding success. Winners were announced and prizes distributed at the OLP's Annual Progress Meeting on November 2. Each winner also received passes to the Rosamond Gifford Burnet Park Zoo and tickets to Lights on the Lake. ■

Grand Prize winner—Tess Freedman, $100

This newsletter is intended to provide general information to the public regarding the Onondaga Lake basin and activities related to the cleanup and restoration thereof. Approval for publication by the members of the OLP does not signify adoption or approval for purposes of regulatory, enforcement or other legal actions, of the factual, scientific, or legal assertions, characterizations or conclusions contained therein.

Reflections is printed on recycled paper, using soy ink.

Onondaga Lake Partnership
c/o U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
1776 Niagara Street
Buffalo, New York 14207

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