



News Release

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For further information: Nancy Sticht, 716-879-4134

Onondaga Lake Partnership to share habitat restoration recommendations

Syracuse, N.Y. – The Onondaga Lake Partnership (OLP) will share information about the habitat of the Onondaga Lake watershed, and recommendations for its restoration, in a public meeting scheduled for Thurs., Apr. 15 at 7 p.m. at the Liverpool Library. The information presented will form the basis for a Comprehensive Habitat Restoration Strategic Plan to help the OLP plan and allocate funds for future habitat-related projects throughout the watershed. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is managing the project on behalf of the Onondaga Lake Partnership.

The objectives of the plan are to establish baseline habitat conditions, identify data gaps and future data-gathering projects, and establish project priorities for the next five to ten years. A public meeting held in December 2003 introduced the habitat restoration goals and objectives and sought public input to the process. The community's primary concern was to ensure that all appropriate groups are involved in the process and that restoration efforts are well coordinated.

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Habitat communities and species have since been identified and evaluated. A number of habitat impairments, such as channel modification, sediment transport and contamination, were also identified for Onondaga Lake and its subwatersheds. Recommendations for restoration include pool creation, restoration of floodplains and invasive species control. In response to community concerns, the preliminary report also identifies the wide variety of projects, programs and plans under way to address habitat issues in the Onondaga Lake watershed, as well as the organizations involved with these efforts. These findings and more will be discussed at the April 15th meeting.

A Habitat Restoration Team will finalize the Comprehensive Habitat Restoration Strategic Plan by August 2004. The team includes representatives from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, Onondaga County Health Department, Onondaga County Department of Water Environment Protection, Onondaga and Cortland County Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Cornell University, the Corps and their contractor, Parsons Engineering.

“This plan will serve as a resource document for future site-specific habitat restoration efforts and will provide a framework for establishing short- and long-term habitat restoration plans and projects,” said Scott Livingstone, project manager. “We look forward to this opportunity to share what we have learned, gather feedback and talk with the community about what this plan will mean to them and to the future of the watershed.”

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The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Onondaga County are jointly sponsoring the development of the comprehensive habitat restoration plan for the Onondaga Lake watershed, at a total cost of \$262,700. An additional \$10,000 for coordination and reporting requirements was 100% federally funded. It is one of many projects currently under way by the Onondaga Lake Partnership, a consortium of federal, state and local agencies and other interested parties working together to restore and enhance Onondaga Lake and its watershed.

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