



A clean lake reflects well  
on all of us.

**(final)**

## **ONONDAGA LAKE PARTNERSHIP (OLP)**

### **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**

**February 2, 2009**

#### **1. ATTENDEES**

##### **Committee Members Present:**

- Mr. Thomas Switala, DPM, USACE, Buffalo District (VTC)  
(Alt. for LTC Daniel B. Snead, District Commander, USACE, Buffalo District)
- Mr. Kenneth Lynch, Regional Director, NYSDEC, Region 7
- Mr. Seth Ausubel, Chief, New York Watershed Management Section, USEPA Region 2 (tc)
- Mr. Charles Silver, Environmental Scientist, NYS Office of the Attorney General (tc)
- Mr. David Coburn, Director, Onondaga County Office of the Environment  
(Alt. for Ms. Joanie Mahoney, Onondaga County Executive)
- Mr. William Owens, Contract Compliance Officer, City of Syracuse (tc)  
(Alt. for Mayor Matthew Driscoll, City of Syracuse)

##### **Others In Attendance:**

- Ms. Mary Jane Peachey, Project Committee Chair, NYSDEC
- Ms. Susan Miller, Outreach Committee Chair, Onondaga County
- Mr. Steven Vriesen, OLP Program Manager, USACE, Buffalo District (VTC)
- Ms. Lynn Greer, Outreach Program Specialist, USACE, Buffalo District (VTC)

##### **Committee Members Absent:**

*(none)*

**2. MEETING ARRANGEMENTS:** The meeting was held on Monday, February 2, 2009 at 2:00 p.m. at the John H. Mulroy Civic Center.

**3. AGENDA ITEMS:** An Agenda was provided which included the following items:

**a. Opening Remarks:** Mr. Switala welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that LTC Snead was called to a meeting in Washington, D.C. and could not attend today's meeting.

**b. Executive Session:** An Executive Session was not deemed necessary for this meeting.

**c. Approval of the September 24, 2008 Meeting Minutes:** A Motion to approve the minutes of the September 24, 2008 meeting, as amended, was moved by Mr. Coburn, seconded by Mr. Lynch, and was approved unanimously.

**d. Approval of the December 18, 2008 Meeting Minutes:** A Motion to approve the minutes of the December 18, 2008 meeting, as amended, was moved by Mr. Lynch, seconded by Mr. Silver, and was approved with 5 Ayes, 0 Nays and 1 Abstention (Mr. Coburn).

**e. Review Open Action Items:** Mr. Vriesen reviewed the Action Item list with the respective action officers for status updates. The Committee agreed that the mudboil whitepaper effectively met the intent of E07-10 and agreed to consider it complete and remove that item from the list. Mr. Switala reported that copies of the mudboil whitepaper were included in briefing packages to Congressman Maffei, Senator Schumer and Senator Gillibrand to be distributed during visits in February.

Mr. Coburn recommended distribution of the mudboil whitepaper to the NY State delegation, Mayor of Syracuse, Members of Common Council, County Legislature, and County Executive. Mr. Ausubel requested that USACE prepare a draft cover letter on OLP letterhead for concurrence from the Committee.

**ACTION ITEM:** (Vriesen) Prepare draft cover letter to distribute the mudboil whitepaper to elected officials.

Mr. Vriesen mentioned that E08-1 would be completed by the standing committee chairs to be reported later in the agenda.

**4. CORRESPONDENCE:** Mr. Vriesen reported that USACE had not sent any outgoing correspondence since the last meeting. USACE received a signed Committee Member Agreement from Ms. Karen Moore from SUNY-ESF who will be joining the Outreach Committee. The other Partner agencies had no correspondence to report.

## **5. STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

**a. Outreach Committee:** Ms. Miller reported on the Outreach Committee meeting held on January 21, 2009. The following are highlights from the meeting:

- 2009 Outreach Committee Objectives: The Outreach Committee passed a Motion to recommend approval of their 2009 goals. Ms. Miller mentioned that the top two priorities for the Outreach Committee this year are to update the public website including Wikipedia, and review/revise the 2009 Outreach Committee budget.

The following Motion was moved by Mr. Lynch, seconded by Mr. Coburn, and approved unanimously.

**MOTION:** The Executive Committee approves the Outreach Committee Objectives for FFY 2009 as submitted.

- Committee Member Update: Ms. Miller informed the Committee that Mr. Reginald Durant who represents the League of Women Voters on the Outreach Committee passed away 2 January 2009. Ms. Miller will send a letter to the League offering them an

opportunity to fill the vacant seat. Karen Moore will represent SUNY-ESF (vice Tom Hughes).

- Newsletter Insert: The newsletter insert was published on 22 January 2009 in the Onondaga County Neighbors insert and distributed to 85,000 households in Onondaga County.
- Onondaga Creek Conceptual Revitalization Plan: The draft OCRP is being reviewed by select Outreach Committee members.

**b. Project Committee:** Ms. Peachey reported on the Project Committee Meetings held on January 15, 2009. The following are highlights from the meeting:

- No Discharge Zone: NYSDEC and NYS Canal Corporation are moving forward with designating the entire NYS canal system, including Onondaga Lake, as a No Discharge Zone (NDZ). As part of this process, NYSDEC needs to get information regarding the quantity, usage and condition of all the pump out stations on the lake.
- Lake Water Quality Model: There are two major initiatives ongoing for the lake model: 1) the Project Committee is working with Dr. Atkinson regarding concerns raised by Dr. Effler, specifically phosphorus bioavailability and plunging inflow from Onondaga Creek, and 2) QEA (contractor developing the model) has prepared an interim report that addresses questions raised from the Phase II Peer Review. The final phase of model validation will likely begin next month.
- Onondaga Creek Conceptual Revitalization Plan: Onondaga Environmental Institute (OEI) requested significant comments by 1 February 2009.
- Project of the Month – CADA and HSPF Models: The Project Committee continued discussions about the use of the Contributing Area, Dispersal Area – Export Coefficient Model (CADA-ECM) to enhance the HSPF watershed model outputs and the need for the Scientific Technical Program Integration Board to evaluate its feasibility.

## **6. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

**a. Contact Recreation in Onondaga Lake:** Mr. Silver offered a brief summary of the memorandum submitted to the Committee regarding Onondaga Lake bacteria and primary contact recreation. The Attorney General's office began to assess bacteria levels in the lake in April 2008 based on concerns over increasing recreational usage of the lake. The data, collected by Onondaga County as part of their Ambient Monitoring Program (AMP), show that approx. 50% of the sampling events collected one day following storm events indicate that bacteria levels exceed acceptable levels for bathing beaches. It is noted that there are no bathing beaches on Onondaga Lake. However, there are contact recreation activities taking place on the lake.

In addition, Mr. Silver and Mr. Davis reviewed two examples of management programs for primary contact recreation. The Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) has established a protocol for the Charles River where water samples are tested 72 and 48 hours prior to an annual swimming race. The race is cancelled if the E. coli levels exceed 235 counts per 100 mls. The NYS Office of Parks has established preemptive closure levels for many State Park bathing beaches based on storm events that occur within the previous 24 hours. For

example, bathing beaches in Erie County have preemptive closure numbers based on rainfall amounts and bacterial levels to determine acceptability for contact recreation activities. Mr. Lynch pointed out that the NYSDOH does regulate bathing beaches, but it is important to distinguish between swimming at bathing beaches versus other contact recreation activities.

Mr. Ausubel agreed that there is a benefit to providing reassurance and identifying a measure to provide safety assurances for water related activities. There is public interest in contact recreation at Onondaga Lake and USEPA recommends that the OLP work with NYSDOH and Onondaga County Health Department to establish a protocol. USEPA promulgated bacteria standards applicable to public bathing beaches in the Great Lakes in 2004. While these standards were not promulgated for inland fresh waters (including Onondaga Lake), they can be used as guidelines for primary contact recreation activities in these areas. While EPA has promulgated standards, local authorities make beach closure decisions.

Mr. Coburn recommended inviting Mr. Ron Heerkens (NYSDOH), Mr. Gary Sauda (Onondaga County DOH), and perhaps a representative from the Visitors Bureau to the next meeting for further discussion after the Committee has had the opportunity to review the memorandum provided by Mr. Silver. Mr. Lynch added that the Committee consider individual agency roles and the OLP role with respect to this issue; the Partners should be cautious about the OLP making determinations about safety without DOH involvement. Mr. Ausubel added that there are two roles for the OLP: 1) if the OLP sponsors a contact recreation event, we are responsible for ensuring that it's safe, and 2) the OLP can serve as an advocate but must recognize that responsibility ultimately lies with health officials and regulating agencies.

## **7. NEW BUSINESS:**

**a. OLP Impacted Projects List:** Mr. Vriesen explained that the impacted project list is a tool developed last year to identify current and future OLP projects and the consequences of not completing the projects or receiving Federal funds to support the projects. The list has been updated based on projects that were funded in the past year and projects approved for funding in the OLP FFY2009 Approved Project List. Mr. Coburn suggested naming 'sewersheds' or 'areas' versus 'RTFs' for ACJ projects in both the approved and future projects sections. Mr. Ausubel recommended changing the top section title to 'Approved OLP Projects With Insufficient Funding', and the bottom section title to 'Future OLP Projects With Insufficient Funding', to eliminate the reference to Federal funding. The Committee concurred with the recommended changes. Mr. Vriesen indicated that he would update and distribute the final list to the Committee immediately following the meeting. USACE will include the OLP Impacted Project List in Congressional briefing packages for visits scheduled in February. The following motion was moved by Mr. Lynch, seconded by Mr. Coburn, and approved unanimously.

**MOTION:** The Executive Committee approves the OLP Impacted Projects List as amended.

**b. Onondaga Creek Conceptual Revitalization Plan (OCRCP):** Mr. Ausubel stated that the Project Committee has reviewed the final draft OCRCP with no show-stoppers. The Partners have received the OCRCP files electronically on CD and were encouraged to begin their review. Mr. Ausubel added that project team members from the Onondaga Environmental Institute (OEI) will give a presentation about the OCRCP at the next meeting. USEPA would like the OLP to approve the OCRCP for public release at that meeting, if possible, so its release is not

delayed further. OEI is also developing an Executive Summary which is currently not available but will be provided to the Partners as soon as possible. Mr. Coburn responded that the Executive Committee will 'accept' versus 'approve' the plan, as was the procedure for previous work products, such as the Lake Visioning report. Mr. Coburn added that the County believes some of the recommendations in the plan go beyond what is feasible and has concerns over the recommendation to incorporate the OCRP into the Onondaga Lake Management Plan. Mr. Owens requested that further discussion of the OCRP recommendations be suspended until all the Partners have had a chance to review the plan. Ms. Peachey asked the Partners for specific guidance of what was expected from the Project Committee. Mr. Ausubel stated that the Partners expect the Project Committee to confirm and document that the project scope of work was met. Mr. Coburn suggested that Standing Committee members be invited to attend the presentation by OEI. Mr. Owens refuted attendance and participation by Standing Committee members at the presentation that will be made to the Executive Committee.

## **8. OTHER BUSINESS:**

**a. Issues – Committee Housekeeping:** Mr. Switala requested that this agenda item be tabled to the next meeting to allow the Committee Chairs additional time to research meeting attendance records.

**b. Issues – USACE Customer Satisfaction Survey:** Mr. Switala thanked those who had responded to the Customer Satisfaction Survey and requested that the Partners who have not yet responded please take a moment to complete the survey.

## **9. PUBLIC COMMENT:** None.

**10. ADJOURNMENT:** The next meeting is scheduled for April 29, 2009 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the NYSDEC Region 7 Office. The meeting was adjourned at 4:03 p.m.

Number	Date of Origin	Due Date	Action Officer	Tasking	Status
E07-10	27-Apr-07		Resource Subcmte	Provide a recommendation for a long term solution for funding the continuing operation and maintenance of the Tully Valley mudboils.	Complete
E08-1	18-Dec-08	29-Apr-09	Peachey/Miller	Review 2008 committee meeting records for committee member attendance.	In-Progress