

# Onondaga Lake Partnership

## 2008 Year in Review

ONONDAGA LAKE PARTNERSHIP



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A clean lake reflects well  
on all of us.

# ONONDAGA LAKE PARTNERSHIP

## 2008 YEAR IN REVIEW

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# INTRODUCTION

The Onondaga Lake Partnership (OLP) was created in 1999 through legislation introduced by Congressman James T. Walsh. Six local, State, and Federal agencies form the Partnership and its Executive Committee, and include the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC), New York State Attorney General's Office, Onondaga County, and City of Syracuse. The OLP Project and Outreach Committees include representatives from the six Partners, State and Federal agencies, community interest groups, and unpaid volunteers. Through the cooperative efforts of this diverse group of stakeholders, the OLP coordinates the environmental revitalization, conservation, and management of Onondaga Lake.

Through the Partnership, millions of dollars have been brought into the community to support projects designed to revitalize the lake. Since the signing of the court-approved Amended Consent Judgment (ACJ) in 1998, over \$140 million in Federal funds have been secured by Congressman Walsh, along with approximately \$135 million from New York State. In addition, Onondaga County has paid the local share on all County Projects and a substantial portion of the local share of other Onondaga Lake Partnership projects.



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# 2008 PROJECT SUMMARY

During the past year, the Partnership has continued to work diligently on a number of projects aimed at improving water quality of the lake and its tributaries including:

1. Completion of the Midland Regional Treatment and Storage Facility and beginning its operation to capture combined sewage from three major overflows that previously emptied directly into Onondaga Creek during storms;
2. Installation of pipelines to convey combined flows for storage in the Clinton Street area;
3. Completion of two more sewer separation projects on the City's south side which closed two combined sewer overflow (CSO) discharges, and constructed new sewer lines that convey only stormwater to the creek;
4. Development of the Draft Onondaga Creek Conceptual Revitalization Plan;
5. Development of a surface water model for the Onondaga Lake watershed;
6. Exploration of alternative green technologies for mitigating Tully Valley Mudboils.

At this point, there are only two remaining sewer separation projects to be completed under the current ACJ program. While completing the above-mentioned "gray" projects as required under the ACJ, the County has turned their attention to working with ACJ partners, and others in the community to find alternative solutions to combined sewage issues and place an emphasis on "green" projects.



# ONGOING EFFORTS

Through the Partnership, EPA funds support public education and outreach, Agricultural Environmental Management, the Tully Valley mudboil remediation and hydrogeologic investigations, and other projects. Since 1996, EPA has awarded approximately \$122.5 million to develop and implement a comprehensive restoration, conservation, and management plan for Onondaga Lake. Over \$100 million of EPA funds have been used to fund the Onondaga County CSO and wastewater treatment improvements.

EPA and the OLP continue to identify sustainable funding sources to continue the implementation of OLP's programs, especially the Mudboil Remediation Program which, with cessation, would have an immediate impact on Onondaga Creek water quality because of the increased sediment yield to the Creek and eventually to Onondaga Lake.

EPA's priority is to meet the water quality goals of the Onondaga Lake Management Plan through its support of point and non-point source pollution control projects. In order to meet water quality goals, EPA (through the Partnership), encourages development of a revitalization program for the Onondaga Lake watershed and ecosystem.

Planning and design of Phase I of the Creekwalk to connect Onondaga Lake to Armory Square is complete and construction is scheduled to begin in Spring 2009. Phase 2 of the Creekwalk, connecting Armory Square to Kirk Park, is currently in the design process.

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# GOING GREEN

For the first time, the County applied for and received a State Urban Forestry Grant in 2008 to implement a green infrastructure program on the City's near west side within the Clinton Sewershed. Nearly 400 trees will be planted in this neighborhood and two model rain gardens will be created. In support of this project outreach and education efforts will be scheduled in the area to explain the environmental benefits of the trees and rain gardens.

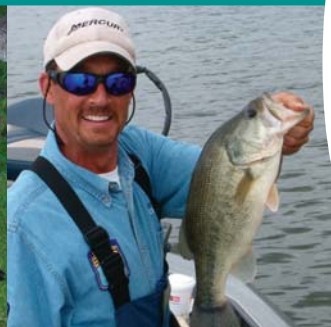
The County has begun the next phase of the Loop the Lake trail to extend the West Shore Trail south over Nine Mile Creek, up onto the 'White Cliffs', and terminating in the upper parking lot of the State Fairgrounds. Funds to construct the project have been approved and the trail and bridge over Nine Mile Creek have been designed

## WATER QUALITY

Under the County's Lake Improvement efforts, EPA's management plan for Onondaga Lake, and with cooperation and support of the Partnership, there continue to be improvements in the water quality of Onondaga Lake. There is less algae, ammonia, and phosphorous in the lake, more oxygen throughout the lake, increased aquatic plant growth resulting in additional fish habitat, and increased resident fish populations.

Improvement in the lake water quality has brought increased public use. The public has identified the need to provide navigation buoys on the lake to enhance boating safety. Working with the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, the Partnership has facilitated the installation of such buoys during the recreational months.

However, there is more work to be accomplished. The OLP is facilitating a further study in Onondaga Creek and Harbor Brook to identify dry weather sources of bacteria that still impact these waterbodies. Once these sources are identified, NYSDEC and others will work to have them properly remediated.



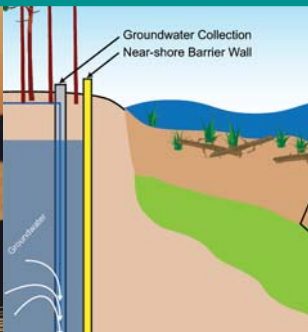
# REMIEDIATION

NYSDEC plays a lead role in overseeing the cleanup of industrial pollution that has impacted the lake and surrounding upland areas. In 2007, the Federal Court approved an agreement that requires Honeywell International to remediate the contaminated sediments in the bottom of the lake. In short, the plan calls for dredging approximately 2.65 million cubic yards of contaminated sediments and capping over 500 acres of lake bottom to eliminate the impact of contamination in the lake.

Honeywell is in its second year of designing the dredging remedy. More specifically, Honeywell is defining the nature and extent of dredging, designing a sediment containment area, and working on wastewater treatment options associated with the project which is expected to begin in 2012. As part of the remedy design, NYSDEC and Honeywell have convened a technical working group to develop a Habitat Restoration Plan for the lake. This plan will assure that after dredging is complete, the lake bottom and surrounding areas will be restored to provide improved habitat for fish and wildlife.

In addition to addressing contamination in the lake sediments, Honeywell is responsible for remediating many upland sites which impact the lake. Honeywell is now constructing the second phase of a barrier wall along the southwest shore of the lake. The three-phased, 1.5 mile long, underground barrier wall stops contaminated groundwater from reaching the lake, collects the groundwater and sends it under I-690 to Honeywell's new Willis Avenue Groundwater Treatment Plant. The plant is operational and now treating collected groundwater to meet State water quality standards before water is returned to the lake. This state-of-the-art system is currently capable of treating 150 gallons of contaminated groundwater per minute, and has the potential to expand to 450 gallons per minute.

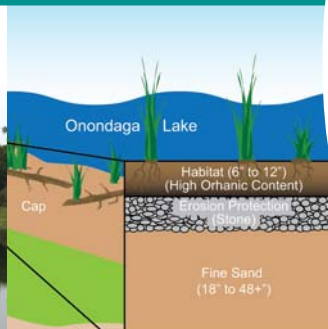
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# REMIEDIATION (CONT.)

Honeywell has also completed the removal of eight tons of mercury from the soil at the old Linden Chemical and Plastics (LCP) site, located in Geddes near Nine Mile Creek. This removal, along with other required remedies at this site including a groundwater containment system, represents the elimination of the largest source of mercury contamination to the lake. The planting of native plants, grasses and more than 12,000 trees in what were once contaminated areas around the former LCP site has resulted in a restored wetland area where many types of wildlife are returning and thriving.

Most important to the industrial pollution remediation process, the DEC and Honeywell are working on a Citizen Participation Plan that will be used to fully involve the public in the development and implementation of the remedy. Public meetings, work groups and other outreach activities will be used to engage the public in the process.



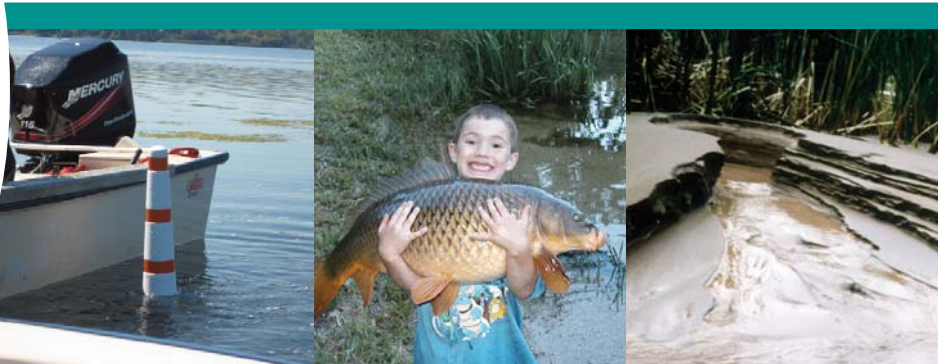
# COMMITTEE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

## Project Committee:

- Reviewed a draft public document outlining progress made toward accomplishing lake improvement projects and refining strategies for achieving remaining work and rehabilitation goals.
- Worked with government agencies and private entities involved with scientific computer model developments that will be used as predictive tools to facilitate regulation and cleanup within the Onondaga Lake watershed;
- Facilitated placement of buoys in Onondaga Lake to mark known shallow-water hazards;
- Refined funding options for continued management of sediment loading from the Tully Valley mud boils to Onondaga Creek;
- Reviewed and approved technical documents to identify dry weather bacteria sources in Onondaga Creek and Harbor Brook.

## Outreach Committee:

- The Mini Grant program funded \$9,994.00 in grants that supported distribution of phosphorous free fertilizer and summer camps that educate children on water quality and aquatic habitat of Onondaga Lake, and non-point source pollution.
- The Teachers Education program funded \$1,000.00 in grants to assist area teachers in educating students about the lake watershed.
- The Speakers Bureau provided 24 presentations to over 450 people.
- Izaak Walton League Fishing Clinics: 7 'Fish-Ins' were held this summer and hundreds of children attended each event. Fishing rods and other equipment were provided in part by the Partnership.
- 7th Annual Lake Day featured a 'Go Green' trail with rain barrels, information on rain gardens and green roofs, and examples of "green" measures to reduce the volume and pollutants carried into Onondaga Lake in stormwater runoff. Free rain gauges, tree seedlings, and phosphorous-free fertilizer was distributed as well as information to reduce urban non-point source pollution.



## 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

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

## PROJECT COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Chaired by New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

Representatives of Executive Committee agencies, as well as the:

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

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

## OUTREACH COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Chaired by Onondaga County

Representatives of Executive Committee agencies, as well as the:

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

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

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.

You can contact the Onondaga Lake Partnership at:  
(800) 833-6390 or [info@onlakepartners.org](mailto:info@onlakepartners.org)

For more information, visit the Onondaga Lake Partnership Website at:  
[www.onlakepartners.org](http://www.onlakepartners.org)