

This is a story of a community effort to build a buffer strip on the shore of Otsego Lake. Why? Well, at a meeting of the Board of Directors of the Otsego Lake Association we discussed a project to show how erosion into Otsego Lake could be reduced. A buffer strip could be one answer. But where could we see one. Lake Chautauqua. Since that was too far away, why not build one? It was decided that the foot of Pioneer Street next to Lakefront Park in Cooperstown would have the best visibility. The die was cast.

Cast of Characters

Nickname	Full Name	Role in this operation
BOD	OLA Board of Directors	Governing body, OLA
LVGC	Lake and Valley Garden Club, Member of the Garden Club of America	Prime Mover
OLA	Otsego Lake Association	Originator
Burr	Burnett Southworth	OLA Director (Middlefield) and Webmaster
Carl	Carl Good	OLA Director (Cooperstown)
Paul	Paul Lord	President, OLA through most of this project
Wayne	K. Wayne Bunn	Current President, OLA
Mary	Mary Clarke	OLA Director (Springfield) and LVGC member
Mickie	Mickie Richtsmeier	OLA Director (Springfield) and LVGC member
David	David Sanford	OLA Director (Middlefield)
Suzy	Suzanne Kingsley	President, LVGC, 2004-2006
Elaine	Elaine Bresee	President, LVGC, 2006-2008
Peggy	Peggy Poulson	Program Chairman, LVGC, 2004-2006
Buzzie	Robert Busse	Head, Park Maintenance
Win	Win McIntyre	One time OLA Technical Advisor
Mayor	Carol Waller	Mayor, Village of Cooperstown
Brian	Brian Clancy	DPW Superintendant
Lynn	Lynn Marsh	OLA Member, Horticulture Consultant

At a meeting of the BOD on October 2, 2004 Win distributed information about possibilities for a Lake Festival in 2005. He stressed that

this was in its formative stages. The Board was receptive to this idea. In addition to the ideas that Win brought, suggestions were to include

a fishing derby, a diver demonstration, vintage boat display using multiple venues, **and a model buffer strip planting on display.** The next step was taken at a BOD meeting to engage OLA in the construction of a Lakescape at the Cooperstown Lake Front Park: OLA was to create a Lakescape on a section of the park that could be used as a demonstration of lakescaping. A gift of \$500 from Mrs. Betsy Hawn was to be used. We were going to do it.

We asked the Village Board of Trustees (2005) for permission to construct a demonstration buffer in Lakefront Park but our plan was rejected. Instead they did give us the OK for Pioneer St. This was because the Village had a real problem with the runoff with storm water from the top of Pioneer above Main Street. A torrent would wash debris all the way down and right into the lake. The good news was that our "temporary" park buffer strip could now become permanent ...the bad news was that the size was twice what we had planned and budgeted for.

The project was announced at the OLA Member Meeting in June of 2005: A Buffer Strip Display was underwritten by OLA. It was planted at the foot of Pioneer St. for display at the Festival and using lake-friendly plants which buffer run-off. Landscaping was done by Melinda's Greenhouse in Richfield Springs.

Further plans were announced at an OLA BOD meeting August 6, 2005. Since the buffer strip would be threatened by storm water cascading down Pioneer Street and whereas the OLA's buffer strip educational value could be markedly enhanced by installation of

storm water filter and infiltration devices, we allocated up to \$4,500 for the procurement of such devices for Pioneer Street. Scottie, Carl, Paul and Wayne were authorized to consult with Village officials to arrive at a suitable solution. Actually, a pattern was established that OLA would buy the equipment and other necessary equipment and the Village would supply the labor. The final selection of such devices was left to the buffer strip subcommittee (Scottie, Carl & Paul) in consultation with Village officials. The buffer strip was completed in time for the 2005 Lake Festival. Filters were installed shortly thereafter.



In late June of 2006 we had a 100-year rain. The lake came up at least three feet! Much of Lake Front Park was under water. It looked as if the buffer strip had drifted about 20 feet out (picture above) into Otsego Lake. But wonder of wonders, the strip was 90% intact. While it was out in the lake, it became a friend of wild life (picture of the duck).

In September, Mary asked Suzy (then President of LVGC) if LVGC might be interested in cooperating with OLA by either donating or doing

a buffer strip (whole



or part) across Lakefront Park at the sea wall. Permission from the Village Trustees would be required, but they allowed the OLA to do a partial buffer strip. It does make the lake front park look lovely and it does help the run off. Suzy was excited by the project. Mary was asked to present this to the LVGC Board. Suzy's thinking was that it could be a fun and useful project. Also since LVGC had just completed its project at the Otsego Manor, this could be a civic project for 2006. The board also thought it was a great project for LVGC.

Peggy, LVGC program chairman) requested a speaker to explain the status, requirements, and purpose of the Buffer Strip at the foot of Pioneer St., as well as the "proposed" strip along the seawall. This was to be given to the general membership of LVGC. The talk was scheduled for May 2006 at the Cooperstown Library. Because of its proximity to the park, this would enable the members to see the site before or after the meeting. The membership voted in favor of the plan as presented. Final approval by LVGC was obtained on September 11.

At the OLA Member Meeting for June of 2006, Paul reminded the group that last year our showcase at the Lake Festival was the buffer strip. He explained that an expansion of the buffer strip across the front of Lake Front Park was being considered. Storm water runs down park property causing erosion and soil to spill into the lake. Erosion was also occurring because of north winds. To deal with this, OLA paid for rip rap in addition to deep rooting plants. OLA worked together with LVGC on this project. A tentative plan was developed. At this point it was projected that plantings would cost approximately \$2500. Benches, decorative rocks and a raised walkway that paralleling the current sea wall were also included in the tentative plan. Members were asked to contact Paul if they would like to work on this. The Biological Field Station told us that 19 million pounds of mud are going into the lake each year! There was a discussion about this including questions about buffer strips for the golf courses and ditching problems along the roads.

Since OLA was on the agenda for a Village Trustee's Meeting September 15, it seemed that the Trustee meeting might be a good place to introduce a "master plan". The Mayor liked the idea and would ask the Trustees about it. Also, OLA assured the Trustees that we would not ask the Village for funds to build the buffer strip.

In the mean time, Suzy met with Lynn Marsh, an OLA representative and local horticulturist to discuss the plan that she had drawn up to check the garden design for accuracy of types, placement and quantity of plantings. She volunteered to present

her part of the plan to the Village Board at their meeting in July of 2006. LVGC was ready to move. The proposal was that the Village would prepare the area and provide the mulch. OLA would purchase the topsoil and rip-rap and LVGC would provide the plants.

At a meeting of the OLA BOD in June, 2006, it was estimated that the buffer strip would cost approximately \$2500 for plants, \$800 flagstones, and \$500 for decorative boulders. LVGC pledged \$1500 toward this project. A motion was made and accepted that OLA match the Garden Club gift utilizing \$1000 from our funds in addition to the \$500 donation from Elizabeth Harvey. This was thought to be particularly appropriate since she was a long time garden club member and OLA supporter.

The Village Board of Trustees asked that they be provided with a design sketch including plant locations, plant descriptions and paths. It was also necessary to present the plans to the Parks Committee for approval. It was getting tight to have the buffer strip addition ready in time for the 2006 Lake Festival. Next, we discovered that our estimate for costs was much too low. It was decided that constructing the boardwalk of recycled plastic would be the most cost effective and green solution in the long run. For the next phase of the buffer strip, the price for the material would be \$3,032.75. But not to worry, it will all work out. Oh, and the walkway was to be handicap accessible.

On July 17, 2006 a plan was presented to the Village Board of Trustees. The Trustees approved it

unanimously and sent us to the Planning Board.

Suzy "pitched" the plan to the Board. The plan was complete:

Section A: A sketch of the entire park on the top of the drawing showing our 3 phase plan.

Phase I: completed buffer planting.

Phase II: proposed new buffer planting

Phase III: future buffer planting.

Section B: Below the above sketch our current version of our plan incorporating the existing buffer strip with the boardwalk running through it to Pioneer Street. There were 60° turn arounds at each end of the 4-foot wide boardwalk.

The County Codes officer informed us that we needed an engineer or architect to draw up the blueprint of the boardwalk. He referred us to The Catskill Center for Independence who did this for us at no charge. Fortunately, David agreed to oversee the installation of our boardwalk. The Planning Board was suitably impressed.

Most were very pleasantly surprised with the boardwalk and liked Suzy's great design. It flew with some "minor" changes

Thereafter the Planning Board made the demand of a 5 foot wide boardwalk and we agreed. We then had to get approval from the Zoning Board for a structure that close to the edge of the Lake and then back to the Parks Committee to keep them advised. We also needed approval from the Watershed Council, Lake Committee and DEC. We finally received everyone's OK that fall.

We quickly ordered the materials for the Boardwalk. Paul and Suzy, Mickie and Elaine then went to BOCES for assistance with plants and carpentry. They spoke with John Janiszewski, who is in charge of the Agricultural Production and Science area at BOCES and he was willing to grow bare root plants for us until we are ready for them in the spring. If we could plant before school was out, his students would help deliver the plants and help with the planting. They also spoke with Joe Boan, principal at BOCES concerning the construction of the boardwalk. He was supportive of the idea of the Building Trades Program participating in the project. He discussed the project with the new Building Trades teacher, Steve Zukaitis. Joe also said that if the project seemed too large that we could possibly also involve our sister school (NCOC) in Grand Gorge.

The boardwalk composition is recycled high-density polyethylene which has color added throughout. The plastic comes from recycled water bottles. The sections were built by using 5 runners 8' long by nominal 2" X 6". These runners were evenly spaced with two, 5' apart, another in the middle, with two more splitting the distance between the middle and the outside ones. The treads are 5/4 inches thick by 6 inches wide and 5 feet long. They are screwed to the runners. Each 8 foot section requires 17 treads and about 85 stainless steel screws to fasten it together.

To be in compliance with the Federal and State laws for the handicapped a wheelchair "turnaround" must be 5 feet by 5 feet

Don Wyckoff from the Catskill Center for Independence filled us in on a number of points: spaces required for handicap parking (1/25), how it must be sited and where best it should be located. He also figured out where our entrance must be located. The Village removed a section of curb for access to this entrance. Don provided us with a drawing/blueprint of the boardwalk for the Planning Board. He also advised us what signs were necessary and where they should be placed.

At the OLA Informational Meeting on August, 2006, Paul informed the membership that the Village Planning Board had the previous day approved our request to raise funds for an addition to the buffer strip planting at Lakefront Park. Paul explained that Suzy, who represents the LVGC with whom OLA is collaborating on this effort, had prepared eleven revisions in response to various concerns and that we still did not have a finalized plan.

On 11/14/2006 the Daily Star printed:

Lake Front Park Buffer Strip Expansion Approved, Fundraising Begins

The Otsego Lake Association (OLA) and its partners, the Lake and Valley Garden Club (LVGC) and the Otsego Northern Catskills BOCES, proudly announce the start of fundraising for a redesigned waterfront in Coopers-town's Lake Front Park. After careful regulatory review by various Village boards and committees, the three organizations have been authorized to commence work on an ambitious project intended to increase the recreational value of the Lake Front Park

while affording Otsego Lake greater protection from human impacts. Just as importantly, the project will provide lake front property owners an example of buffer strip protections that they can modify for use on their own properties to help protect Otsego Lake. Visible work is expected to be apparent in April 2007.

The new lakefront design features a handicap accessible boardwalk, aesthetically pleasing plantings which will protect the Lake while enhancing the view, and benches and large rocks inviting pause at the lakefront. This project is a large-scale extension of the demonstration buffer strip initiated by OLA in 2005 at the base of Pioneer Street. That demonstration strip is currently stabilizing the lakeshore and interrupting the flow of Village street sediments into Otsego Lake while providing an improved vista. OLA's focus is implementation of the Management Plan for Otsego Lake approved, in 1998, by the four municipalities around the Lake. OLA endorses buffer strips for the protections that they provide the Lake from nutrient flow, from invasive species, and from silting. The LVGC has a long history of projects enhancing the views and natural environment around Otsego Lake. They have designed the buffer and made the first financial contribution to the project. BOCES will be providing student labor, skilled craft worker supervision, and the use of sophisticated machinery to ensure the handicap accessible boardwalk is built efficiently.

Additional partners are being sought to ensure the plans approved are implemented. This is a challenging project with an estimated retail cost in excess of \$13,000. OLA and LVGC speakers

are available to speak with groups, large and small, interested in providing financial or gardening contributions. POC for speakers is Paul Lord, 435-4989 or lordp@usa.net. Design plans can be viewed at the Village of Cooperstown Library. Contributions marked "buffer strip" can be mailed to OLA, P.O. Box 13, Springfield Center, NY 13468.

You can build your own buffer strip using publications (plus other lakeshore references) available from the Otsego Lake Association for \$20. Visit the OLA booth at the Lake Festival or write: "OLA, P.O. Box 13, Springfield Center, NY 13468".

At the OLA Member Meeting in June of 2007, Paul noted that we had partnered with community groups in developing the buffer strip at Lake Front Park in the Village

Buffer strips:

- Reduce erosion of lakeshore.
- Can be built using a wide variety of plants.
- Keep upland soils & nutrients out of Otsego Lake.
- Discourage goose use of lakeshore.
- Can be a cooperative project such as with
- OLA
- LVGC
- Village of Cooperstown
- BOCES
- Boy Scouts
- Catskill Center for Independence
- The buffer strip is
- environmentally sound
- handicap accessible
- pleasing to the eye

Cooperstown's Lake Front Park has been redesigned and replanted by a variety of community partners includ-

ing OLA, the Lake & Valley Garden Club, the ONC BOCES, the Village of Cooperstown, local youth groups and more. This inviting and pleasing garden welcomes thousands to the shores of Otsego Lake while protecting the Lake from the usual impacts of human activity near lakes. The innovative concept and design has won the New York State Federation of Lakes Association best lakeside buffer strip award in 2007 (\$500) and the 2008 Garden Clubs of America award for best ‘work in-process’ in the U.S. for 2008 (\$25,000). We invite you to visit the park which is located at the foot of Pioneer Street in Cooperstown. Plants used in the garden were all chosen for their ability to thrive in varying wet and dry conditions typical of lake-shores which are seasonally flooded. Our garden is regularly flooded and frozen and, yet, it provides a beautiful entranceway to Otsego Lake from Cooperstown.

At the date of this writing, April 2009, Phase III of the garden is being finalized. Any garden is an ongoing project, but Phase III should be the last phase in the overall plan. The last stretch of boardwalk will be installed. Careful plant selection and materials should keep yearly upkeep to a minimum in the coming years.

OLA and LVGC are in the beginning phases of another public buffer strip on the shores of Otsego Lake. It is our goal to develop many such gardens around the lake. All the gardens will have appropriate signage explaining what a buffer strip is and why they are important to the lake eco-

gy. Maps will indicate the location of all the gardens open to public visitation. Literature will educate and encourage the public to plant their own version of a buffer strip on their own property.

Plant List

Artemisia
Black Eyed Susan
Black willow
Blue Star
Bronxii Forsythia
Chelone - Pink
Chippewa Blueberry
Clump Siberian Iris
Daylily
Dwarf Blue Leaf Artic Willow
Gentians
Golden Nine Bark
Hot Lips Turtlehead
Japanese Blood Grass
Joe -Pye Weed
Inland (Northern) Sea Oats
Nine Bark
Northsky Blueberry
Purple Coneflower
Red Baron Blood Grass

Rudbeckia Goldstrom

Shasta Daisies

Shenandoah Switch Grass

Silky and Red Twig Dogwood

Variegated Dogwood

Variegated Sweet Flag (acorus

Yellow Flag Iris

Forsythia