

## Otsego County Water Quality Coordinating Committee Minutes

967 County Highway 33, Cooperstown, NY 13326

(607)547-8337, ext. 4

Wednesday, September 2, 2015

Present:

Tom Pritchard, Arnold Lake Association

Matt Albright, Biological Field Station

Erica Cruden, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

Danny Lapin, Otsego County Conservation Association

Kelly Byrnes, Otsego County Planning Department

Jordan Clements, Otsego County Soil and Water Conservation District

**The meeting was called to order at around 1:15 p.m. by Facilitator Jordan Clements.**

### 1. TREASURER'S REPORT

- J. Clements began the discussion by asking if there were any questions regarding the document. No questions were asked. He reported approximately \$6,550 in total assets.
- Clements expressed a desire to obtain more funding through mini-grants to fund new and ongoing programs. J. Clements asked if the committee thought the idea was worthwhile.
- M. Albright agreed it was worthwhile to pursue funding to continue mini-grant opportunities through WQCC.
- Clements suggested a potential mini-grant could be utilized to fund another groundwater quality sampling program.
- Albright noted that it would be important to involve Les Hasbargen of SUNY Oneonta since Hasbargen was a major contributor to OCCA's "What's In Our Water? Campaign."
- Albright said Otsego County currently has an adequate database of information on the county's groundwater quality.
- Clements inquired about a recent BFS proposal to solicit research projects.
- Albright said the proposals that went out 1-2 years ago garnered some good projects that were beneficial.
- Clements inquired if it would be beneficial to solicit another round of mini-grant proposals.
- Albright encouraged Clements to communicate with the BFS, OCCA and other relevant organizations involved in the last round of proposals.
- Lapin mentioned that his former graduate institution, the Bard College Center for Environmental Policy, is looking for additional research projects for its incoming class, and a mini-grant could fund a potential research project.

### 2. REVIEW OF MINUTES

- J. Clements commenced discussion on the minutes from the January and June 2015 meetings.
- T. Pritchard noted that D. Lapin was listed as present twice in the January minutes.
- Clements opened the floor for a motion to approve the January and June 2015 minutes.
- **T. Pritchard motioned to approve the minutes from the January and June 2015 WQCC meetings. E. Cruden seconded. Motion passed unanimously.**

### 3. REVIEW OF OLD BUSINESS

- J. Clements inquired if there were any concerns amongst the committee members present regarding old business.
- E. Cruden inquired about discussing certain topics during the old business portions of the meetings.

#### 4. NEW BUSINESS

##### a. Update to “A Plan for the Management of the Otsego Lake Watershed”

- J. Clements introduced D. Lapin, who gave a brief overview of a document created in preparation for updating of “A Plan for the Management of the Otsego Lake Watershed.”
- Lapin gave a brief overview of the document he had prepared for the meeting on behalf of OCCA. The document first assesses the strengths and opportunities for improvement of the current plan. It then provides model language from other jurisdictions to inform the update process. Lapin also stated that examining how other jurisdictions tackled similar watershed management challenges can provide ideas for policies to integrate into the plan update. He concluded by saying that the overall purpose of the document was to initiate discussion amongst the committee on the update to the plan.
- J. Clements opened the floor for discussion.
- M. Albright said it is important to be aware that the former plan was ratified by the County and adopted by the municipalities surrounding Otsego Lake.
- Albright said the update should not deviate from the content of the current plan in order to maintain buy-in from key municipal stakeholders. He explained that a lot of the teeth associated with the previous plan came from the fact that it was adopted by all of the municipalities surrounding the lake.
- Albright noted that both the Chautauqua and Cazenovia Lake watershed management plans are being updated and asked if Lapin was aware this was happening.
- Lapin said he was not aware of the Cazenovia plan being updated, but was aware of the update to the Chautauqua Lake Watershed Management Plan. Lapin noted that the CLWM plan utilized a strong approach to their analyses and to development of policies.
- Albright said the BFS has a graduate student in the Lake Management Masters’ Program working on Cazenovia’s plan update. The student is examining phosphorous and sediment loading from onsite waste treatment systems surrounding the lake.
- Albright stressed the importance of involving municipal leaders early in the planning process and suggested composing a letter to representatives from the municipalities surrounding the lake.
- Clements agreed that doing so would be beneficial, adding that municipal leaders are particularly concerned with the economic implications associated with the plan.
- Lapin concurred with Albright’s feedback, agreeing it was of the utmost important to involve municipal representatives early on and to develop a chain of communication amongst key stakeholders.
- Lapin also said that the plan update would allow entities operating in the Otsego Lake watershed to highlight their ongoing work.
- E. Cruden offered to contact colleagues working in the New York City watershed to gather information about implementing specific best management practices. Lapin said that doing so would be very helpful.
- Albright offered to e-mail Lapin examples of other lake watershed management plans that BFS has been working on.
- Clements asked Albright about the cost of printing the 2007 plan.
- Albright said that funding came from a wide range of sources—including the advertisers who took out space on the plan.
- Albright suggested that a next step would include sending out an email to municipal representatives informing them that the update process is beginning.
- Albright said OCCA Executive Director Darla Youngs should chair the update committee and said he and Holly Waterfield of the BFS would be interested in serving on the committee.
- Clements said he would be interested in participating on the update committee as well.
- Albright said that prior to updating “A Plan for the Management of the Otsego Lake Watershed,” it would be important to update the “State of the Lake Report.” He said the

previous “State of the Lake” report was nearly 20 years old and that the information should be updated to reflect the current conditions of Otsego Lake.

- Albright noted that the issues facing Otsego Lake have evolved greatly over the past 10 years, and that the issues which prompted the formation of the first lake watershed management plan have largely been addressed.
- Albright mentioned that one of the current issues impacting Otsego Lake was the spread of exotic species.
- T. Pritchard inquired about the difference between exotic and invasive species
- Albright explained that the terms can be used interchangeably, but noted that exotic species are arguably less harmful because they are not always “invasive.”

#### b. Speaker Identification for the Upcoming Months

- J. Clements reminded the committee that there will be a speaker on Wednesday, September 30. He asked those present if they could recommend any speakers for the months of October and November.
- M. Albright said the North American Lake Management Society will be hosting a research conference in November and a group of graduate students from the BFS will be speaking there. He suggested using the October meeting as a dry run for students to present. E. Cruden liked the idea.
- Albright noted that, currently, none of his graduate students are working on lakes in Otsego County. However, their input could still be very valuable. He said graduate students in the BFS Lake Management Masters’ Program are funded by local organizations and, for a nominal fee, can update local lake watershed management plans.
- Albright mentioned that the level of preparedness of each jurisdictions vary in regard to updating their plans. Therefore, some graduate students will still be gathering baseline data, while others already have baseline data from which to develop their plans.
- Clements asked Albright to provide him with blurbs about the speakers from the BFS.
- Cruden recommended that the speakers should make their presentations accessible for lay audiences. Albright said that was a great idea, however, the ability of graduate students to present their technical research to lay audiences may vary.
- Clements suggested that a generalized talk about lake issues could be a separate topic. He asked if Albright would be willing to give the talk during the November meeting.
- Albright said he would think about it and could possibly recycle a presentation he had used for a different venue.
- Albright said it is important to generate a lot of buzz about the talks, pointing to a presentation given by H. Waterfield where only two people showed up. Clements concurred.
- Albright recommended giving each talk a purpose and suggested that a possible topic would be a formal kickoff of the “State of the Lake” update and the update to “A Plan for the Management of the Otsego Lake Watershed.”
- Clements stressed the importance of the financial bottom line when it comes to securing buy-in from municipal representatives—suggesting it would be beneficial to make the representatives aware of the financial benefits associated with plan implementation.
- Cruden recommended pushing the kick-off of the two documents until the spring/summer of 2016 in order to ensure that summer residents would be able to attend.
- The committee agreed that doing so would be a good idea.
- Albright suggested that he and Lapin could co-present during the kickoff of the two documents so that the audience could see the connection between science and policy in relation to watershed management. Lapin said he would be happy to co-present.

## 5. DEPARTMENT REPORTS

### A. Arnold Lake Association

- T. Pritchard reported that not much is happening on Arnold Lake aside from a few algal blooms. He said he had gathered a few samples and sent them to the BFS.

- Pritchard said Kiyoko Yokota of BFS assured him the algal blooms were nothing to be concerned about.
- Pritchard reported that, during peak times last year, the Arnold Lake Association tried to staff entry points on the lake to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species.
- He noted that most lake visitors were regulars and that the signs around the lake were making people aware about the hazards associated with invasive species.
- Pritchard noted that the unique bowl-like characteristics of the environment surrounding the Arnold Lake was creating a delta.
- He said that the formation of a delta was concerning for some residents as they were worried their water supply intake valves could become clogged. Pritchard reported that the issue was still being investigated.
- Clements said it would be difficult to fit construction equipment on the road surrounding the lake due to challenging terrain. He suggested re-vegetating the roads surrounding the lake.
- Pritchard noted two camps are being torn down and will be rebuilt in the future.

#### B. SUNY Oneonta Biological Field Station

- M. Albright reported that the North American Lake Management Society will be meeting in Saratoga in November. He said the meeting will be very informative and that there will sessions geared toward lake associations and lay audiences.
- Albright noted that it was the first local meeting of the Society in years.
- Albright reported that the BFS hired a new faculty member to replace David Wong (a zebra mussel specialist). Albright said Wong will be missed. The new faculty member, Dan Stich, is a fisheries specialist and it is expected that he will be heavily involved in the lake watershed management plan update.
- Albright reported that the BFS received a call from an individual living near Silver Lake (southwestern Otsego County). The individual in question was concerned that a nearby agricultural operation was impacting the water quality of the lake.
- Albright said that the individual was informed there was no water body flowing from the farm to the lake (aside from a very small ephemeral ditch) and that the potential for the farm to harm the water quality of Silver Lake was very low.
- Albright said the individual noticed a few batches of water chestnuts on the lake, but said that the individual had already eradicated most of the water chestnuts in question.
- Albright said the BFS interns are in the process of wrapping up their research.
- He reported that the water filtration systems in the BFS lab have not been working properly. This was due to an incursion of zebra mussels into the filtration system.
- Albright said the slow flow of water into the filtration system created an ideal environment for zebra mussels and that he is mitigating the problem by turning off the water flowing into the lab.
- Albright said he is in the process of working with a student to explore environmentally-friendly solutions to mitigating the zebra mussel problem. He reported that the student has found that vinegar is highly effective in eradicating zebra mussels. Albright said that he had been in communication with E. Cruden about the legality of the matter.

#### C. New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

- E. Cruden reported that she is currently in the process of evaluating Water Quality Improvement Project Program (WQIP) engineering and planning grants.
- She said the Village of Richfield Springs submitted a WQIP engineering and planning grant. The grant is intended to fund a feasibility study on a potential sewer system for residences on Canadarago Lake.
- Cruden said she e-mailed the mayor of Richfield Springs, noting that the grant made the study possible. She said that the timing is right for a feasibility study, adding that Lamont Engineers will be doing the leg work. Cruden reported that the study will be supplemented by the extensive amount of research on the Canadarago Lake watershed conducted by the BFS.

- Cruden reported that the DEC is looking to hire a specialist on algal blooms and that the new hire may be a good candidate to speak in front of the committee next spring.
- She also reported that there was an algal bloom which prompted warnings on Canadarago Lake and said she had received a call from an angler on Canadarago Lake who inquired if it was safe to eat the fish he had caught.

#### D. Canadarago Lake Improvement Association

- Since Ryan Fagan, president of the Canadarago Lake Improvement Association, could not be present, D. Lapin gave a brief update.
- Lapin said the Canadarago Lake Improvement Association reports that a new purple algae floating across the deeper waters of the lake has been tested with the help of researchers from SUNY Oneonta and has been positively identified as *Oscillatoria agardhii*. This algae, which looks similar to purple strands of yarn, currently covers miles of the lake and can produce small amounts of harmful toxins.
- Lapin said that more information is available on the Canadarago Lake Improvement Association's website and the story has been picked up by "The Daily Star."
- M. Albright said this was a very intense bloom as far as that species of algae is concerned. He added that it is important to be aware of the fact that the toxicity of the algae could change (e.g., it is not toxic now, but could become toxic in the future).

#### E. Goodyear Lake Association

- As representatives of the Goodyear Lake Association could not be present, D. Lapin gave a brief update on the Portlandville Fishing Access Site improvement project.
- A \$40,000 project to enhance the Portlandville Fishing Access site in the Town of Milford was announced by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation last week. A legislative grant obtained by Senator James Seward for the Goodyear Lake Association paid in part for the recent installation of a new universally accessible dock system that will allow for safer and easier access to the water for launching and retrieving car top boats. DEC funded the rest of the project and provided the labor for the upgrades. The Otsego County Conservation Association acted as fiscal agent on behalf of GLA in administering its grant, which totaled \$20,000 and helped support ongoing eradication of the water chestnut. Other improvements to the Portlandville site include an expanded parking lot and construction of an informational kiosk. DEC also thanked the NYS Department of Transportation and ENEL Green Power North America for partnering on this project.
- Lapin passed around photos of the project for the committee's consideration.

#### F. Otsego County Conservation Association

- D. Lapin reported that OCCA is continuing its "clean, drain and dray" public education campaign with display ads in the Daily Star, Cooperstown Crier, Freeman's Journal, Hometown Oneonta and all seven Pennysaver editions. Ads run for eight weeks from the second week of July except for the Pennysaver ads, which run for 13 weeks.
- He said OCCA thanks the groups who supported, in part, the cost of the display ads: Butternut Valley Alliance, Canadarago Lake Improvement Association, Catskill Regional Invasive Species Partnership, Dave Brandt Chapter of Trout Unlimited, Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society, Otsego Lake Association, Otsego Land Trust, Otsego 2000, Southern Tier East Regional Planning Development Board, Village of Cooperstown.
- Lapin said OCCA is also grateful to Blue Water Studio for creating the television commercial that kicked off the public education campaign. He explained that part of the public education campaign revolves around the online "Pledge to Clean, Drain and Dry." Lapin encouraged WQCC members to take a moment to take the pledge on the OCCA website if they hadn't already.
- Lapin reported that the response to the pledge has been a little lackluster thus far, even from those groups that supported the countywide invasive species transport law last year.

- Lapin said water chestnut pulling on Goodyear Lake has ended for this year: three plants found in the final outing last month. OCCA Program Director Jeff O’Handley has reported that approximately 150 pounds of water chestnuts have been removed this year. O’Handley will be leading additional eradication efforts this month in Otego. There will be no pulling in the Oneonta swamp for this year.
- Referring to the new dock at the Portlandville Fishing Access site, Lapin said this closes out a grant received by the GLA a number of years ago, for which OCCA has been the fiscal agent and has provided support. This project has nothing to do with the access point at the Crumhorn Mountain Fishing Access Site.
- In regard to the Crumhorn Fishing Access Site, Lapin said OCCA had submitted comments to the DEC regarding concerns as to whether that site is appropriate for motorboat access and spoke at the public informational meeting with the DEC held by the Town of Milford on August 5. OCCA recommended that the DEC not dredge the site and open it to motorboats—the project, however, is already in motion and expected to be completed by October.
- Lapin reported that he has been working hard preparing for the update to “A Plan for the Management of the Otsego Lake Watershed.”
- He also said OCCA has helped publicize the October Trout Unlimited presentation by Bob Boyle, the Canadarago Lake algae alert, and the GLA dock installation.
- Lapin said OCCA has submitted comments to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on its “Draft Assessment of the Impacts of Hydraulic Fracturing for Oil and Gas on Drinking Water Resources.” OCCA’s primary concern is the fact that the levels of scientific understanding and protective measures associated with hydraulic fracturing have not advanced enough to determine if hydraulic fracturing is safe at this time. Lapin encouraged the committee to view the comments on OCCA’s website.
- Lapin reported that OCCA has challenged campaign team members to raise \$10,000 by September 21 in support of programs to protect Otsego County’s water and land from invasive species and, as of September 2, OCCA is halfway to its goal. The campaign team is working to raise these funds on behalf of OCCA. Lapin encouraged the committee to visit OCCA’s “CrowdRise” website to learn more.

#### G. Otsego County Planning Department

- K. Byrnes reported that Karen Sullivan had received an email regarding the Environmental Facilities Corporation’s Revolving Loan Program for water infrastructure program.
- Byrnes said the EFC is looking for feedback from participants on how to improve or adjust the program. The deadline for feedback is Friday.

#### H. Otsego County Soil and Water Conservation District

- J. Clements reported that the past summer has been very busy for the district.
- He and his staff are in the process of closing out four agricultural/nonpoint sources grants and a project in Otego.
- Clements said he hopes to learn the status of the four aforementioned grant applications this month. These grants would affect eight farms. In particular, the grants would help fund six grazing projects, one covered barnyard project, and one project involving the relocation of a leachate collection and silage facility.
- Clements said he is working on the WQIP applications put in by the District toward three major stream restoration projects.
- Clements noted that these projects are extremely costly – approximately \$8,000 was spent putting in a 1,700-foot buffer.
- Clements said riparian buffer projects are largely well received by the public.
- He also pointed out the importance of hydroseeding, citing a 2006 grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency which allowed the district to perform hydroseeding operations on two mine reclamation projects.

- Clements reported that the second annual farm tour will take place on October 12. The tour will cover four farms that the District and the Natural Resources Conservation Service have worked on. He said five Otsego County Representatives and NYS Assemblyman Magee will be attending the tour this year. Assemblyman Lopez, Assemblywoman Tenny, and Governor Cuomo will be unable to attend.
- Clements said the tour will be helpful when it comes to leveraging grants and can generate opportunities for collaboration between local political representatives, local organizations, and the agricultural community.
- Clements said he has been researching the approaches taken by other counties to obtain funding for stream restoration/management projects. He noted that the district is the only agency capable of using taxpayer money to work on private land.
- Clements said both Steuben and Chemung counties have implemented innovative cost-sharing approaches to aid their local SWCD branches in implementing stream restoration/management projects. He is coordinating with representatives from both counties to speak about their efforts in front of the Otsego County Board.
- Clements reported that the district's ESI program geared toward municipal highway departments had two events—one on July 30 and the other on August 24-25. He said, oftentimes, municipal highway departments are the first responders to flooding/stream bank erosion issues. 16-20 people from five municipalities attended the workshop, which involved a 300-foot gravel removal project on the Otego Creek. The project was intended to showcase optimal erosion and sediment control.
- Clements said he had hoped for a better response, and he will likely hold the workshop every other year. He is exploring the idea of opening up the program to contractors—citing a similar program in Delaware County.

#### 6. NEXT BUSINESS MEETING

- J. Clements said the next business meeting would be scheduled in an ad hoc manner.
- Clements asked D. Lapin to verify the speaker for the September 30 topic meeting with Darla Youngs. Lapin agreed to do so.
- Clements asked the committee if there was any other business to discuss.
- T. Pritchard brought up a question about docks in state parks. Are they regulated by the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation or by the DEC?
- M. Albright and E. Cruden suggested that T. Pritchard ask Rich Scheckles at Glimmerglass State Park.
- Clements opened the floor for a motion to adjourn the meeting.
- **M. Albright motioned to adjourn the meeting. T. Pritchard seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 2:25 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted,  
 Danny Lapin, OCCA Environmental Planner

NOT PRESENT: Canadarago Lake Improvement Association; Cooperstown Village Water Committee; CCE; Dave Brandt Chapter of Trout Unlimited; NYCAMH; NYSDOH; Otsego Lake Association; Otsego Lake Watershed Supervisory Committee; Goodyear Lake Association; Otsego Land Trust; Otsego 2000; Richfield Springs Water Treatment Plant.