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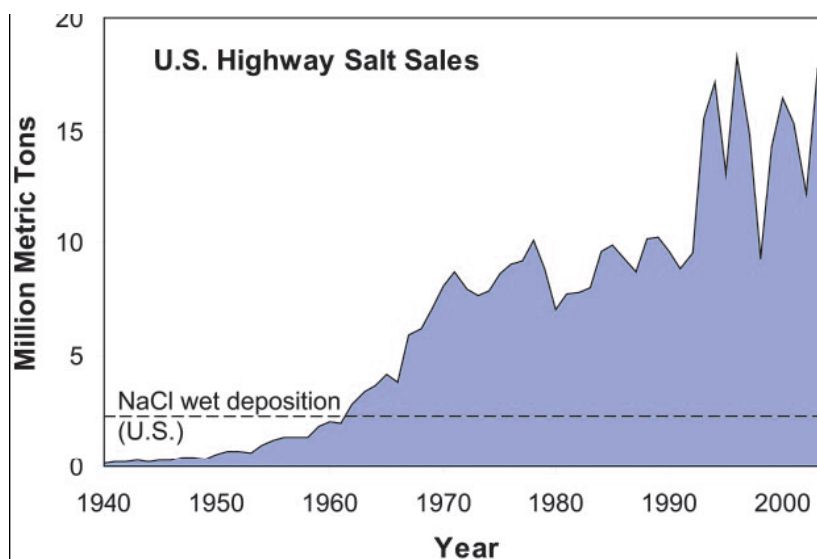
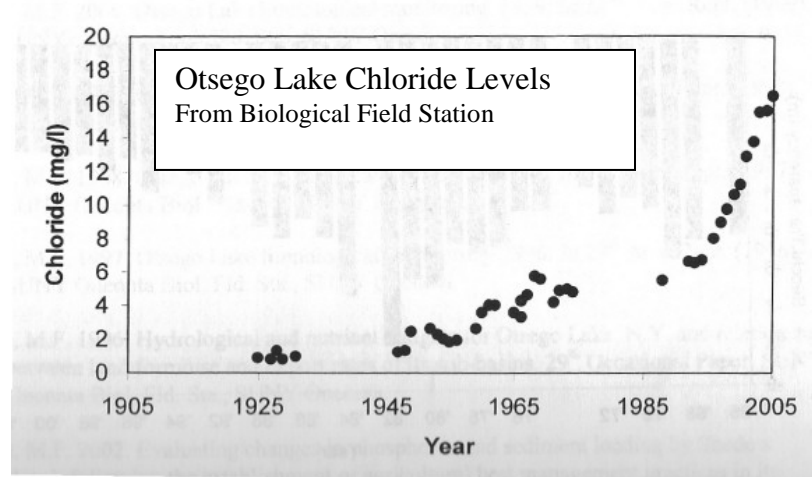
At Large
Wayne Bunn
Thomas Horvath

January 2008

Dear Friend of Otsego Lake –

If your yearly cycle resembles mine, things slow down, ever so slightly, at this time of the year (except when we are shoveling snow). This letter is intended to focus our attention on Otsego Lake and its protection at a time when many of us are not focused on the Lake. Unfortunately, ~~our Lake~~ adverse human impacts continue unabated in this time of the year when few of us are actually enjoying Otsego Lake.

The Biological Field Station (BFS) on Otsego Lake has been monitoring chloride levels in the Lake for decades. These levels are up 30 fold in less than 100 years and continue to rise. It appears the reason is pavement salting. Please compare and note the similarities in the following two graphs.



The first graph tracks chloride levels in Otsego Lake. The second is from the prestigious **Proceedings of the National Academy of Science (PNAS)** (Jackson & Jobbagy. 2005. From Icy Roads to Salty Streams. PNAS Vol 102 No 41 pp. 14487-14488). The graph was published in an October 2005 article making the case that road salt was responsible for the damage to freshwater lakes documented in a PNAS article published the previous month (Kaushal *et al.*, 2005 Increased salinization of fresh water in the northeastern United States. PNAS Vol 102 No 38 pp. 13517-13520). The first of the cited PNAS published articles makes the following points:

- Chloride levels near inhabited areas have increased as much as 100x
 - over forested areas
- Many surface waters will not be potable
 - within next century
- Freshwater availability is threatened by salt
- Freshwater life is threatened by salt

As noted in the BFS data, Otsego Lake chloride levels have risen proportionately to the use of road salt in the U.S.

We know that we can't thrive in an early 21st century winter near Otsego Lake without salt to protect life and property. Having said that, we recognize that salt is often used thoughtlessly reflecting its inexpensive purchase price. The price salt is having on Otsego Lake must be considered. Salt facilitates the introduction of exotic species, jeopardizes our water supply, and corrodes vehicles and infrastructure. We can use salt smarter until a reasonable substitute is identified.

Whether we are considering our personal habits on our private property or municipal policy on our public property, salt should be used when needed and not used when not needed. Salting a sidewalk or road is no substitute for clearing that surface of snow. Problem areas chronically covered in drifting snow need snow fences – either living or constructed – to stop the drifts. Salting of surfaces before an ice event needs to be done with a wet mixture to ensure the salt sticks to the surface to be deiced. (Most rock salt applied to dry roadways is propelled to roadway ditches by vehicle tires.) Prophylactic deicing and snow removal needs to be planned with the latest weather forecasting technologies. Finally, alternatives that reinforce road salt's deicing capabilities, or which replace salt, need to be identified. Please consider these guidelines and share your concern with municipal officials.

I would also like to direct your attention to some good news. If you have not seen it already, when spring returns to Otsego Lake, please note the fine job done, by the New York State Department of Transportation (DOT), on the Thayer Farm road ditches. Responding to requests from local municipal officials, the Otsego Lake Association, and the State University of New York, DOT graded the uphill slope leading to the Thayer Farm State Highway 80 ditches and lined the ditches with erosion resistant cobbles. (The Thayer Farm, a part of the BFS, is approximately seven miles north of the Village of Cooperstown on State Highway 80.) Many of you have asked what you can do for the Lake beyond your financial donations to OLA and likeminded organizations. Here is an opportunity to congratulate

some State workers for taking environmentally sensible steps to protect the road and our Lake. Please consider writing a letter to:

New York State Department of Transportation
Region 9 Director Jack Williams
44 Hawley Street
Binghamton, NY 13901.

In your letter please thank DOT for:

- Protecting State Highway 80;
- Protecting Otsego Lake from mud flows;
- Enhancing the aesthetics of the State Highway 80.

Ask them to:

- continue such efforts in lieu of traditional ditching
 - which send tons of mud into Otsego Lake;
- work with you and your municipality to identify other sites
 - needing more permanent ditching.

As always, I am interested in your thoughts on how we can better protect our special Lake. Please feel free to contact me in whatever way is convenient for you.

Warm regards,

Paul H. Lord