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Otsego Lake Association Update

By Gilbert Vincent



On Saturday, August 13, the Otsego Lake Association (OLA) held its annual meeting in the pavilion at the Otsego Sailing Club on Brookwood Point. Founded in 2002, OLA's mission is to educate, advocate and actively participate in protecting the health, beauty and well-being of the lake. The audience was looking for information in regard to the recent beach closures.

Following Drew Porter's brief history of the Sailing Club, Jim Howarth announced a State award recognizing the excellence of the OLA newsletter and naming Scottie Baker as the recipient of the Presidential Award for her many years of dedicated service. Wayne Bunn presented the Lake Citizen award to Lee Ferrara, a master scuba diver on the Biological Field Station dive team that sets out the no-wake and monitor buoys, assists in lake research and cleans out the water intake for the Village.

Holly Waterfield, Research Support Specialist from SUNY Oneonta, gave an overview covering the historical statistics and history of Otsego Lake from its glacial formation 13,000 to 16,000 years ago to the present day. She focused on the information recording water clarity and the introduction of non-native species since 1935, when scientific records began to be kept. She recounted the successful efforts to control the wastewater from Glimmerglass State Park in the 1970s, to cut down on the proliferation of the State-introduced alewives in the 1980s and the recent introduction of zebra mussels and the newly discovered (at Sunken Island in 2020) larger quagga mussels.

The warmer water this year resulted in a toxic algae. Waterfield explained that despite its common name, blue-green algae is a cyanobacteria. It can cause respiratory problems, skin rashes and gastro-intestinal symptoms. Professor Kiyoko Yokota, a technical advisor to OLA since 2014, gave an update on data collection on the lake with a series of charts showing changes in the water quality and temperature. She further explained the proliferation of blue-green algae and quagga mussels this year.

General advice for local residents from both Waterfield and Yokota is to swim in areas of clear water; to avoid areas where the water is opaque with blue or light green algae, along shorelines and protected bays; to avoid swallowing water and to keep dogs away from the water, particularly where they might groom themselves after swimming. The DEC website HABs (Harmful Algal Blooms) has much useful information and photographs.

Bethany Shaw reported on boat use on the lake and Mary Keefe, Aquatic Invasive Species Steward, explained the progress of the Northern Snakehead, a native fish from Asia, that is a particularly voracious eater. It is in the Delaware River and Susquehanna above Conowingo Dam, but is not believed to have reached Otsego Lake. The DEC requests they be killed on sight. The meeting concluded with everyone feeling more knowledgeable about the lake and appreciative of the role that OLA takes in sharing information.

[Biological field station](#), [Brookwood Point](#), [drew porter](#), [Holly Waterfield](#), [Jim Howarth](#), [Lee Ferrara](#), [Otsego lake association](#), [Otsego sailing club](#), [Wayne Bunn](#)