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McIntyre Bluffs, Photo by Emily Fell

First Public Meeting Held for Sterling and Wolcott Creeks Watershed Integrated Watershed Action Plan

By: Emily Fell, Eastern Great Lakes Watershed Coordinator; Great Lakes Program

NYSDEC's Great Lakes Program is pleased to share that a virtual public meeting was held in March for the Sterling and Wolcott Creeks Watershed Integrated Watershed Action Plan (IWAP). The IWAP is a new and exciting pilot opportunity that will create goals, indicators, strategies, and actions at the watershed-scale to maintain ecosystem health and resilience for families and communities into the future. Check out the [website](#), including the [presentation](#) from the meeting, which includes the background and draft goals, as well as expected outcomes for the IWAP.

The draft Sterling and Wolcott Creeks Watershed goal themes include:

1. Coastal
2. Wetlands
3. Floodplains, Riparian Areas, and Streams
4. Forests
5. Water Quality
6. Sustainable Working Lands
7. Heritage and Sense of Place

You can share your feedback, ideas, and experiences related to the draft goals found in the Public Meeting presentation slides, by emailing the project team at: SterlingWolcott@ramboll.com.

Photos of the Seneca River and Cross Lake

By Lee Badman



Water Quality Protection Educational Media Prepared by the OLWIPD

By Adam Effler, Executive Director of the Owasco Lake Watershed Management Council

The Owasco Lake Watershed Inspection and Protection Division (OLWIPD) staff completed the following educational documents for 2022:

- New Homeowner Packet
- Stormwater Brochure
- Rain Garden Brochure
- Green Infrastructure Brochure

These documents are intended to support broad educational objectives of the OLWIPD and represent action items requested by the WQMA Communications and Outreach Working Group. The educational documents will be available on the [WQMA](#) and [Owasco Lake Watershed Management Council](#) websites. The Council is also encouraging the circulation of this information among Owasco Lake watershed municipalities.

Conservation Agriculture and Protecting the Owasco Lake Watershed

By Adam Effler, Executive Director of the Owasco Lake Watershed Management Council

Conservation agriculture, a system-based approach to soil and water conservation, high crop productivity and profitability, has significantly expanded over the last several decades and has a growing foothold across the Finger Lakes region. Yet, as a knowledge-intensive and complex system to develop and implement, and due to the fact that many generations-old family farms maintain steadfast traditions, adoption rates have only recently accelerated. New York's largest dairy farms, which optimize field crop yields and milk production using sophisticated technologies, also leverage a system-based approach to improve farm efficiency and meet the demands of permitting guidelines provided by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation. Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) that make up some of the largest dairies in NYS use sophisticated Certified Nutrient Management Plans for guiding conservation agriculture with the ultimate aim to conserve soil and water and improve sustainability over the long term.

Owners and operators from the four CAFOs having a footprint within the Owasco Lake Watershed have demonstrated soil and water stewardship, not only through their recent advancements in conservation agriculture, but also through their volunteered time and engagement with local partners to get projects underway that further advance conservation measures towards soil health and watershed protection. For example, the recently recommended community consensus Owasco Lake Watershed Rules and Regulations, which are currently under review by the NYS Department of Health, had critical stakeholder participation by agricultural leaders within the farming community. The compromises that were made as part of that community process would never have come to pass, if it were not for the involvement of those local leaders.

Conservation agriculture utilizes soil science to evaluate soil conditions and drive actions that maintain a nutrient mass-balance across an entire farmstead. For example, producers do not experience conservation, therefore financial, benefits for garnering soils that are depleted in nutrients, minerals, and beneficial bacteria. Likewise, the same holds true for soils that have those critical soil constituents in excess. Spruce Haven Farm that has a small footprint in the Owasco Lake watershed, has identified this paradigm and has taken a big step to acknowledge and handle excess manure phosphorus. Over the past several years, Spruce Haven has supported a NYSERDA-funded pilot project to evaluate the physical and chemical removal of phosphorus from excess manure on the farm. Doug Young, owner of Spruce Haven, expressed

his want to provide “an industry service towards improved farm efficiency and optimization.” According to the farm’s soil tests, there was a period of time when some of his fields exhibited phosphorus in excess. Rather than spread manure on those fields or incur associated transportation and distribution costs to spread on more distant fields, the farm welcomed a new solution. Spruce Haven offered to pilot an innovative technology aimed at creating a concentrated phosphorus product that could reduce distribution costs, better situate farms to reduce manure volume, and improve the agronomic value of manure to advance precision applications for phosphorus depleted soils. Mr. Young, self-described person of faith, explained “There’s a duty for stewardship. We have a moral drive to make positive strides towards improving efficiency and protecting the environment.”



Photo credit: Crystal Creek Organics, September 2021.

Cayuga County WQMA

For more information about the Cayuga County Water Quality Management Agency, check out our website at www.cayugacountywater.org. The Cayuga County WQMA is also on social media. For up to date information on water quality issues and events, please either friend us on Facebook at <https://facebook.com/CayugaCoWQMA> or follow us on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/CayugaCoWQMA>.

The Cayuga County WQMA is looking for story ideas for its webpage and its newsletter. If you have something you would like to share, please email us at wqma@cayugacounty.us.



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