



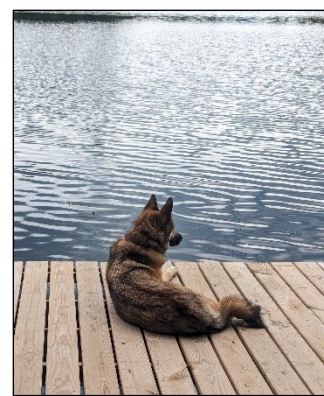
December 2025

Keep Our Water Clean: Pick Up After Your Pet

By Michele Wunderlich, Principal Environmental Planner, Cayuga County Department of Planning and Economic Development

Cleaning up after your dog is not just a courtesy, it is an important step in protecting our lakes, rivers and streams. According to the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC), dog waste is a significant source of water pollution that can pose real risks to both environmental and public health.

Pet waste contains nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorus, as well as various bacteria and pathogens, which is why proper disposal is critical for the environment and public health. When rain or snowmelt travels across yards, sidewalks and streets, it can wash the pet waste into nearby lakes, streams and wetlands. Bacteria found in pet waste can contaminate water used for swimming, drinking and fishing, increasing the risk of illness. Excess nutrients can promote the growth of unwanted rooted aquatic plants and algae, including harmful algal blooms, which can harm dogs, fish and wildlife, degrade water quality and limit recreational use.



To help protect our water quality, pet owners should always clean up after their animals. Bring along a plastic bag or pooper scooper when you walk your dog. Flush the waste (not the bag) down the toilet or toss the waste (bag and all) into the garbage.

Clean water starts with simple everyday actions. Protect our water by properly disposing of pet waste.

Cayuga Recycles: 2025 Programming Highlights

By Evan Tuthill, Senior Planner, Cayuga County Department of Planning & Economic Development



Cayuga County continued its commitment to responsible waste management in 2025 by hosting its four annual collection events, providing residents with safe, convenient options to properly dispose of electronics, tires, and household hazardous materials.

The Spring Electronics Recycling Event, held on March 22nd, featured drop-off sites in Auburn, Cato, and Venice Center and served nearly 600 households. The event collected more than 57,000 pounds of electronics. Notable items included over 22,000 pounds of TVs, 22,000 pounds of small electronics, and more than 6,000 pounds of computers, diverting nearly 29 tons from landfills and preventing hazardous materials from entering the environment.

The Fall Electronics Recycling Event, held on October 18th, brought in a total of roughly 471 participants. Across all three locations provided, 45,000 pounds of electronics were collected. This included approximately 21,000 pounds of TVs and monitors, 6,200 pounds of computers and accessories, 12,000 pounds of small electronics, and 2,600 pounds of printers. In total, more than 22 tons of electronic waste were responsibly recycled.



The Tire Collection & Recycling Event took place on June 7th. Approximately 250 households participated, resulting in the collection and recycling of over 4,000 scrap tires, equal to approximately 65 tons of rubber.

Finally, the Household Hazardous Waste Collection Event on October 25th at County House Road drew about 270 households. The event safely collected and managed a wide range of materials totaling almost 31,000 pounds. Latex and oil-based paints accounted for more than 13,000 pounds, and “flammable liquids and solids” also contributed just over 13,000 pounds to the total. Other collected items included propane cylinders, fluorescent bulbs, mercury devices, antifreeze, and lithium batteries.

Together, the success of these events highlights both Cayuga County and its residents’ ongoing commitment to protecting natural resources, safeguarding public health, and practicing sound waste management. By diverting electronics, tires, and hazardous materials from landfills, these programs help prevent harmful substances - such as mercury, lead, pesticides, and other chemicals - from entering soil and waterways, protecting our lakes, local streams, and aquifers that support drinking water, wildlife, and agriculture.

Participating in these events is just one way to support sustainable waste management. Residents can also access a multitude of resources on the Cayuga County Solid Waste & Recycling website - <https://www.cayugacounty.us/699/Solid-Waste-Management-and-Recycling> - to manage waste responsibly. Looking ahead to 2026, the County will continue offering collection events and expanding education and outreach through newsletters, waste reduction guides, and other publications to help keep communities safe, clean, and environmentally healthy for generations to come.

Hemlock Woolly Adelgid Survey

By Laurel Williams, Invasive Species Education and Outreach Program Manager, Finger Lakes Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM)

Hemlocks are under threat! The Finger Lakes PRISM is seeking dedicated volunteers to join us in the fight against one of our most destructive (and smallest) invasive species, the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA). This tiny insect is wreaking havoc on eastern hemlocks, the Finger Lakes region’s most valuable tree species.

As a volunteer, you can help us fight HWA by surveying on your own around trails and parks in your area, or by attending one of our in-person workshops. With a greater understanding of HWA's distribution, we can better plan efforts to limit its spread and treat it before it's too late!

Types of Events:

- Workshops – Hands-on field sessions to learn how to survey for HWA and identify hemlocks, led by our team and co-hosted by local organizations in your area (Occurring from mid-January to early March 2026). Check out our calendar at <https://fingerlakesinvasives.org/calendar/>.
- Virtual Training – Virtually learn how to survey for HWA and identify hemlocks on your own time. (Teams virtual training occurring in January 2026 but all online training materials will be available in mid to late December). Check out our calendar at <https://fingerlakesinvasives.org/calendar/>.



HWA Ovisacs on a Hemlock Branch

If you would like to register for the 2026 HWA Survey Program, the form is available online at <https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=PMS96d1d9E-ic7KYDt0Dg5OoTJuWnY5NmQMhr1gATE9UMkMyOERMWThPSDVUTzYzNVk3RTZWmkYzUi4u>.

To learn more about our citizen science programs, you can check out our website at <https://fingerlakesinvasives.org/citizen-science-programs/>.

If you have questions or want more information, you can contact Laurel Williams at lwilliams@hws.edu.

For the Lake's Sake: Local Businesses help to Fund OWLA and OLWMC Clean-up Oil Drums near Tributary to Owasco Lake

By Carol Sutkus, President, Owasco Watershed Lake Association

Owasco Watershed Lake Association (OWLA) joined with the Owasco Lake Watershed Management Council (OLWMC) to clean-up a site near a stream that flows into Owasco Lake and to remove containers full of cooking oil that threatened the health of Owasco Lake. This is the first project funded through OWLA's Joe Wasileski Memorial Challenge Program. Dr. Joe Wasileski was an ardent supporter of OWLA and made efforts on behalf of Owasco Lake. John Wasileski, in honor of his brother "Dr. Joe," has agreed to match local business donations to fund projects on behalf of Owasco Lake water quality. The following Cayuga County businesses donated funds to the program for this effort – ALNYE Trucking, First National Bank of Groton, Willis E. Kilborne Agency Inc. in Moravia, Lepak's Docks, Owasco Marine, Pennell's Auto LLC, of Moravia, and Prison City Brewing.





Eighteen 55-gallon oil drums, and fifteen 5 gallon, and one hundred nineteen 2-gallon plastic containers had been deteriorating at a property on Water Street in the town of Locke, within sixty feet of the Owasco Inlet. The property had been abandoned for six years prior to discovery of the containers last year. Some containers had melted due to fire, contaminating the ground. New York State Department of Environmental Conservation tested container contents and soil, determined the oil to be non-hazardous, and therefore had no further

authority or responsibility to remove them. That left the containers to continue to deteriorate.

OLWMC contacted OWLA Board members in April of this year to see if it could provide financial assistance for container removal and disposal. The OWLA Board decided it would do all it could to contact involved parties and raise the funds necessary for action. The work was completed by Momentum Environmental LLC of Bath, NY on September 25th.



These businesses were the first to step forward and provide funding to the OWLA Joe Wasileski Memorial Challenge program. OWLA (a volunteer organization) is hoping to raise additional funds from local businesses for this program. Those funds will be matched dollar-for-dollar up to \$10,000 dollars each year for 5 years, potentially providing up to \$100,000 for projects that benefit Owasco Lake. If businesses are interested in providing funding to this

program, please contact Carol Sutkus at carol_sutkus@owla.org. This project could not move forward without the work of several dedicated OWLA volunteers and the work of the Owasco Lake Watershed Inspection and Protection Division (OLWIPD). Please consider volunteering for OWLA on behalf of Owasco Lake.



Skaneateles Lake Data and Research Summit

By Frank Moses, Executive Director, Skaneateles Lake Association

The Skaneateles Lake Research & Data Summit brings together scientists, research partners, and community members to share the latest findings shaping the future of our lake. From Harmful Algal Bloom trends and watershed management to lake monitoring through advanced technologies, this annual gathering highlights how science and data guide real-world stewardship decisions for Skaneateles Lake. For more information go to: <https://skaneateleslake.org/summit/>.

You're invited!
01.06.2026

SKANEATELES LAKE RESEARCH & DATA SUMMIT

SUNY ESF • GATEWAY CENTER
and VIRTUAL BROADCAST
skaneateleslake.org/summit

The Convenience of Road Salt Comes at a Cost

By Ryan Staychock, Environmental/Natural Resources Educator, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Cayuga, Schuyler and Seneca Counties

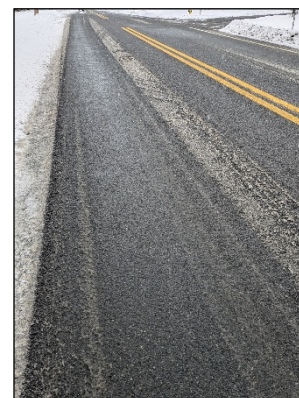
This article was originally published by The Citizen newspaper for Eco Talk column

Wow. Just like that, it's already the middle of the month of December. I love this time of year, especially this year because it has been consistently freezing cold outside. My dog's paws are not tracking mud into the house. Neither are my boots tracking mud into the house. I know, I should always take my boots off before walking around the house, but I am guilty of being lazy when it comes to taking my boots off when I need "just one quick thing from the basement" before I immediately again go outside.

I really do enjoy the winter months. I grew up in Buffalo, NY. So, my memories of winter are filled with holiday goodness, riding my Yamaha ATV around the neighborhood doing fish tails and figure 8's on the snow-covered streets, getting days off school due to snow accumulation, and using my dad's hatchet to make kindling from lumber cut-offs to start fires in our home. My experience with winter, snow and freezing temperatures are mostly positive.

A lot of my winter experience relates to driving in the winter. I appreciate that I can drive during the winter, and I always want to send a BIG THANK YOU to the people that plow our roads. I remember in my young adult days driving to ski resorts during winter storms and safely arriving at our destinations. That's because New York State does an awesome job of keeping our roads open during winter months. It's amazing we can travel from the Finger Lakes Region to New York City or the Adirondacks safely and efficiently so soon after a winter storm blankets the northeast region of the United States. That's partly due to the fact we use salt on the roads. I am thankful for salt being used on the roads, especially since my son is now driving. I value travelling during the winter and I rely on safe road conditions. I take responsibility for the fact that New York State, and my local town highway superintendent, and others apply rock salt to roads to make them safer for me, and my son, to travel on.

Rock salt helps make winter roads safer by lowering the freezing point of water. Normally, pure water freezes at 32°F (0°C). When rock salt (mostly sodium chloride, with a chemical symbol NaCl) is spread on ice or snow, the salt crystals dissolve into sodium (Na^+) and chloride (Cl^-) ions. These ions get in the way of water molecules trying to line up and form solid ice. Because the water can't freeze as easily, the freezing point drops—sometimes to the mid-20s °F depending on how much salt is present. This process is called freezing point depression. If the pavement is warmer than this new, lower freezing point, the ice starts to melt. The melting creates a thin layer of salty water, called brine, which spreads and helps melt even more ice. Brine also makes it harder for new ice to form.



I think it's pretty cool how science, in particular chemistry, impacts our everyday lives during the winter months. Imagine what would happen if every snowstorm, or freezing day, we had to adjust our daily routines because we couldn't drive someplace. I would annually, like wild animals, migrate south every year, then return in the spring when temperatures got warmer.

There are very real costs associated with winter road maintenance. Financially, road salt costs a lot of money. According to Mark Roetzer an interim public works director in Jamestown, NY, the cost of salt increased 41% from last year's prices. The cost went from \$49 to \$69 a ton. Some communities in the

Finger Lakes region use between 2000 and 4000 tons of salt per year, depending on the climate fluctuations. For example, one community in the Finger Lakes Region in 2015-16 used 3,967 tons compared to in 2023-24 used 2,152 tons. (The winter of 2015-16 in the Finger Lakes region was generally cooler and closer to, or below average temperatures with heavier snow expectations, while the 2023-24 winter was warmer than normal with above-average temperatures and milder conditions, making it one of the warmest winters on record in the broader region).

There are costs to the environment and property. According to the US Environmental Protection Agency, “Too much salt in the environment is toxic and lethal to aquatic life, pollutes drinking water sources, and damages infrastructure. Increased salt concentrations lead to a phenomenon called freshwater salinization syndrome (FSS). This syndrome is due to direct and indirect effects of salts that cause other pollutants in soil, groundwater, surface water, and water pipes to become more concentrated and mobile.”

There is always room for improvement. I can start making improvements on how I use salt. According to a new public outreach campaign titled “Don’t Be Salty, New York,” the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC), “encourages all New Yorkers to use these Don’t Be Salty, New York best practices to save money, reduce rock salt pollution, and stay safe: Use Rock Salt Sparingly, Monitor Weather Conditions, and Consider Using Alternative Products.” You can visit the [NYS DEC webpage](#) to learn more or use the words NYS DEC Don’t Be Salty New York in your favorite internet search engine.

The NYS DEC developed a great [fact sheet](#) for municipalities that includes funding opportunities that can be found on their website. You can watch a [video](#) about the importance of salt reduction and find a [podcast](#) to listen to about the public outreach campaign.

Keep warm folks and enjoy the freezing cold temperatures that indirectly reduce the amount of mud on the paws of your pets. And of course, cheers!



Lake Friendly Living Coalition

LAKE FRIENDLY LIVING TIP

DECEMBER



DE-ICING SOLUTIONS

Rock Salt Alternatives Edition

- Magnesium Chloride - Less toxic because it contains less chloride than rock salt or calcium chloride
- Calcium Magnesium Acetate - Good alternative to chloride containing salts, but can cost substantially more than rock salt
- Sugar Beet Juice - Great eco-friendly solution! Safe for cars, pets, driveways, plants, etc.
- Sand - Helps absorb sunlight which melts snow and provides traction. Remember to sweep it up when weather permits to reduce impacts to aquatic habitats
- Coffee Grounds & Kitty Litter - Provide traction, but will not melt the snow. Remember to sweep up & dispose of as weather permits

Lake Friendly Living Coalition

LAKE FRIENDLY LIVING TIP

DECEMBER



MAKE YOUR OWN SALT BRINE

A little salt can go a long way

We all know that salt can help keep our sidewalks & driveways clear, but using it sparingly will keep our lake happy!

After your clear your sidewalks & driveways with a shovel use a mixture of 3.5 cups of rock salt per gallon of hot tap water to make a brine that can be sprayed, reducing your salt use!

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 friend us on Facebook at: <https://facebook.com/CayugaCoWQMA>. The Cayuga County WQMA YouTube channel is <https://www.youtube.com/@CayugaCountyWQMA>.

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.gov.



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