

Cayuga County Water Quality Management Agency



2025 Year End Report

**Approved by the Cayuga County Water Quality Management Agency
on February 5, 2026**

The Cayuga County Water Quality Management Agency's Mission

The Cayuga County Water Quality Management Agency (WQMA) was created by County Legislative Resolution #445-90 to serve the Cayuga County Legislature in meeting its responsibilities in the management and protection of the County's water resources.

The WQMA advises the Cayuga County Legislature on matters related to water resource management and planning. The WQMA is charged with identifying problems, proposing priorities, and promoting the coordination of activities in the management and protection of the County's water resources. More specifically, the Agency is charged with:

1. Creating and maintaining a comprehensive planning and implementation program for water quality management in Cayuga County.
2. Coordinating the responsibilities of agencies and watershed associations with interest in water quality management in Cayuga County.
3. Providing greater public input into the process of water quality management and related programs.
4. Providing an effective public education program to develop public understanding and support for water quality management in Cayuga County.



2025 Cayuga County Water Quality Management Agency Membership**Chair: Ani Fish****Vice-Chair: Seth Jensen****Cayuga County Legislature's Environmental Advisors:**

Director of Cayuga County Planning and Economic Development
Director of Cayuga County Environmental Health
Director of Cayuga County Parks and Trails
Director of Cayuga County Soil and Water Conservation District
Cayuga County Cooperative Extension Executive Director
Cayuga County Solid Waste Management Program Administrator

Kari Terwilliger
Ani Fish
Doug Dello Stritto
Doug Kierst
Dan Welch
Evan Tuthill

Non-County, Local Officials

Town of Owasco
City of Auburn
Cayuga County Association of Town Supervisors
Cayuga County Association of Villages

Edward Wagner
Seth Jensen
Gary Mutchler
Vacant

Representatives from Waterbody Associations in Cayuga County

Cayuga Lake Intermunicipal Organization
Central New York Waterways, Inc.
Duck Lake Association
Lake Como Association
Little Sodus Bay Betterment Association
Owasco Watershed Lake Association
Skaneateles Lake Association Inc.

Keith Batman
Carl Wiezalis
Dale Powell
Pat Mooney
Gary Clark
Ann Robson
Patty Orr

Partners

Cayuga Lake Watershed Network
Central New York Regional Planning and Development Board
Finger Lakes Institute at Hobart and William Smith Colleges
Finger Lakes Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management
NYSDEC Finger Lakes Watershed Program
NYSDEC Great Lakes Program
Owasco Lake Watershed Management Council
Partners for Healthy Watersheds
The Nature Conservancy

Staff Support

Michele Wunderlich, Cayuga County Planning and Economic Development, Principal Environmental Planner, mwunderlich@cayugacounty.gov, 315-253-1107,
<http://cayugacountywater.org>.

CAYUGA COUNTY WATER QUALITY MANAGEMENT AGENCY
2025 YEAR END REPORT
COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH WORKING GROUP

PRIORITY: Celebrate the positive water quality activities occurring in Cayuga County.

ACTION: The celebration of positive initiatives will be the focus of communication pieces (see next priority) generated by the committee - WQMA Communication and Outreach Working Group

PRIORITY: Provide timely information regarding water news, agency activities, and pollution prevention.

ACTION: Prepare and send out quarterly newsletters, (March, June, Sept, and Dec) the purpose of which will be to highlight water quality initiatives, watershed resiliency and response, work of member and partner agencies, and upcoming or current classes or programs. Audience will include County Legislators, municipal elected officials, municipal clerks, and planning boards as well as WQMA partners and members- WQMA Communication and Outreach Working Group

- *All newsletters were sent to the WQMA email list, Cayuga County Legislators, Town and Village clerks, Mayors and Supervisors, City of Auburn Mayor and clerk, and town and village planning board members. They are also available on the WQMA website at <https://cayugacountywater.org/newsletters/>.*
- *The first WQMA newsletter was sent out on March 28, 2025 and posted [here](#). Articles included:*
 - *“Prioritize Your Septic System This Spring.”*
 - *“Soil Sampling for Lawns and Gardens.”*
 - *“Resources Available from Cornell Cooperative Extension of Cayuga County.”*
 - *“Home Lawn and Garden Phosphorus Fertilizer Regulations and Best Practices to Apply Fertilizer.”*



- *The second WQMA newsletter was sent out on May 30, 2025 and posted [here](#). Articles included:*
 - *“Invasive Species Awareness Week.”*
 - *“Moravia Gives Back Day.”*
 - *“Spring Electronics Recycling Event Keeps 28+ Tons of E-Waste Out of Landfills.”*

- **“Looking Ahead: Annual Tire Collection Event Set for June 7th.”**
- **“Partners Protecting Hemlocks for Watershed Health.”**
- **“Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) Research at SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry.”**

- **The third WQMA newsletter was sent out on September 25, 2025 and posted [here](#).**
Articles included:

- **“Protect Our Waterways by Participating in Recycling Events This Fall.”**
- **“2025 Canoga Community Conference: HABs History, Monitoring, New Technology, & Sourcing the Cause.”**
- **“Conservation Field Days.”**
- **“Wastewater Treatment Plants, A Cornerstone to Lake Water Quality Protection.”**
- **“Earth Day! Shrubs Update.”**

- **The fourth WQMA newsletter was sent out on December 18, 2025 and posted [here](#).**
Articles included:

- **“Keep Our Water Clean: Pick Up After Your Pet.”**
- **“Cayuga Recycles: 2025 Programming Highlights.”**
- **“Hemlock Woolly Adelgid Survey.”**
- **“For the Lake’s Sake: Local Businesses Help to Fund OWLA and OLWMC Clean-up Oil Drums near Tributary to Owasco Lake.”**
- **“Skaneateles Lake Data and Research Summit.”**
- **“The Convenience of Road Salt Comes at a Cost.”**
- **“Lake Friendly Living Tips.”**

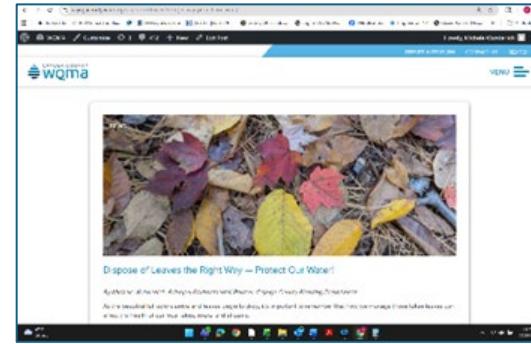


ACTION: Prepare blog posts at least monthly focusing on educating the public regarding a wide variety of water quality news and topics. These blogs will be posted on the website and links published on Facebook- Cayuga County Department of Planning and Economic Development

- **Blog posts were published on the WQMA website at <https://cayugacountywater.org/blog/>:**

- **January 31, 2025: “Hydrilla Monitoring and Treatment in Cayuga Lake 2024.”**
- **February 13, 2025: “Partners Protecting Hemlocks for Watershed Health.”**
- **March 18, 2025: “Winter Weather Patterns and Adaptation in the Finger Lakes Region.”**
- **April 28, 2025: “What Does the WQMA Mean to the Owasco Lake Watershed Management Council.”**

- **June 6, 2025: "Invasive Species Awareness Week."**
- **June 27, 2025: "Skaneateles Lake Watershed 9E Plan for Phosphorus."**
- **July 17, 2025: "Cayuga County Strategic Plan Community Assessment Survey #1."**
- **July 24, 2025: "AIS Surveys on Cayuga Lake, 2025."**
- **August 13, 2025: "The Nature Conservancy Completes Sixth and Final Land Protection Project in Owasco Lake Watershed."**
- **August 26, 2025: "Residential Guidelines to Protect Water Quality In Cayuga County."**
- **September 26, 2025: "Look for Spotted Lanternfly."**
- **October 28, 2025: "Dispose of Leaves the Right Way-Protect Our Water."**
- **November 7, 2025: "Owasco Lake Watershed Nine Element Plan Project Coordination Committee Progress Report 2022-2025."**
- **December 10, 2025: "Christmas Tree Recycling – Cayuga County Trade-A-Tree Program."**



ACTION: Provide assistance through collaboration and partnerships to the Invasive Species Working Group to fulfill their actions – WQMA Working Groups

- **WQMA newsletter articles:**
 - **"Invasive Species Awareness Week."**
 - **"Moravia Gives Back Day."**
 - **"Partners Protecting Hemlocks for Watershed Health."**
 - **"Conservation Field Days."**
 - **"Hemlock Woolly Adelgid Survey."**
- **WQMA blogs:**
 - **January 31, 2025: "Hydrilla Monitoring and Treatment in Cayuga Lake 2024."**
 - **February 13, 2025: "Partners Protecting Hemlocks for Watershed Health."**
 - **June 6, 2025: "Invasive Species Awareness Week."**
 - **July 24, 2025: "AIS Surveys on Cayuga Lake, 2025."**
 - **September 26, 2025: "Look for Spotted Lanternfly."**



ACTION: Promote and distribute the WQMA Residential Guidelines to the public as well as provide to all the County watershed groups for use by those groups- WQMA Communication and Outreach Working Group

- *The WQMA Residential Guidelines are available on the WQMA website at https://cayugacountywater.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Final_Residential_Guidelines-pdf-for-web.pdf*
- *The WQMA Residential Guidelines were distributed to the WQMA email list on August 27, 2025.*
- *The WQMA Residential Guidelines were linked in the Cayuga County Legislature's Planning & Economic Development Committee's Report for September 2025.*
- *Adam Effler sent the WQMA Residential Guidelines to the Owasco Lake Watershed Management Council Directors and asked that they distribute among their constituents and post it on their municipal websites, as applicable. A link is also provided on the Council's website.*
- *The WQMA Residential Guidelines were promoted in Community Science Institute's August Monthly Update at <https://mailchi.mp/86272d9d11ad/csi-monthly-update-august2025>. This document was emailed to approximately 1000 people. They also provided copies on the information table outside of their lab.*
- *The WQMA Residential Guidelines were promoted in the September 5, 2025 Cayuga Lake HAB Weekly Update.*
- *The WQMA Residential Guidelines were:*
 - *Added to the CNY Waterways website: <https://cnywaterways.org/residential-guidelines-to-protect-water-quality/>.*
 - *Added to the Village of Aurora's website: https://auroranewyork.us/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Final_Residential_Guidelines.pdf.*
 - *Added to the Town of Genoa's website: <https://www.townofgenoany.com/water.html>.*



ACTION: Provide recordings of meetings and presentations on the WQMA YouTube Channel- Cayuga County Department of Planning and Economic Development

- *Posted WQMA meetings on the Cayuga County WQMA YouTube channel located at <https://www.youtube.com/@CayugaCountyWQMA>.*
- *Posted the Cayuga Lake Watershed Intermunicipal Organization (CWIO) presentations on the WQMA YouTube channel located at <https://www.youtube.com/@CayugaCountyWQMA>.*

PRIORITY: Update website resources with current and scientific information and promote the WQMA as the source of factual water quality information in Cayuga County

ACTION: Distribute WQMA promotional items at meetings and public events-WQMA Communication and Outreach Working Group

- *Items distributed at the Bob Brower Scientific Symposium on March 8, 2025.*
- *WQMA promotional cards distributed at the Cayuga County Legislature Meeting in July.*

ACTION: Review and update the WQMA website - WQMA Communication and Outreach Working Group

- *Links reviewed and updated on the WQMA website in July 2025.*

ACTION: Work to improve the resource section of the WQMA website to include more research reports and water resource protection information, as well as presentations from partner lake associations – WQMA Communication and Outreach Working Group

- *Posted the Cayuga Lake Watershed Intermunicipal Organization (CWIO) presentations on the WQMA YouTube channel located at <https://www.youtube.com/@CayugaCountyWOMA>.*

ACTION: Gather informational documents on the WQMA website that can be used by homeowners on how to minimize their impacts on water quality – WQMA Communication and Outreach Working Group

- *Owasco Lake Watershed resources are provided on the WQMA website at <https://cayugacountywater.org/what-we-do/resources/>.*

ACTION: Promote members and partners as speakers on water quality issues to community groups and local governments – WQMA Communication and Outreach Working Group

- *The WQMA maintains a list of speakers on water quality issues.*

ACTION: Create a stock photo page on the WQMA website – WQMA Communication and Outreach Working Group

- *Photos have been collected.*

CAYUGA COUNTY WATER QUALITY MANAGEMENT AGENCY
2025 YEAR END REPORT
INVASIVE SPECIES WORKING GROUP

Reduce threats invasive species to water quality in Cayuga County brought on by invasive species. The priority species that the Cayuga County WQMA Invasive Species Working Group concentrated on were those invasive species that have the potential to negatively impact Cayuga County and its watersheds whether terrestrial (e.g., Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA)) or aquatic (e.g., hydrilla).

PRIORITY: Survey invasive species in Cayuga County

ACTION: The Working Group will work with partners to survey for priority species within Cayuga County.

- *Promoted the Finger Lakes Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management's (PRISM) Finger Lakes Trail Survey, Hemlock Woolly Adelgid Volunteer Survey and Macrophyte Survey Programs.*

ACTION: The Working Group will support early detection efforts to respond to new priority invasive species population.

- *The Cayuga County Department of Planning and Economic Development received a report of a possible detection of hydrilla in a new area of Cayuga Lake after the Eco Talk article on hydrilla was published in The Citizen in August (https://auburnpub.com/life-entertainment/article_49a981e6-7d9c-4fbb-a04c-f9145168eb23.html). The Finger Lake PRISM investigated and determined that the suspected plant was not hydrilla.*



Figure 1: Hydrilla

ACTION: The Working Group will distribute reports of partners doing surveillance and monitoring and will assist with finding volunteers for surveillance and monitoring programs.

- *Promoted the New York iMapInvasives Team's 4th Annual Hemlock Woolly Adelgid Winter Mapping Challenge!*

- *Blog post on the WQMA website “AIS Surveys on Cayuga Lake, 2025.”*
- *Promoted the Finger Lakes PRISM’s Finger Lakes Trail Survey, Hemlock Woolly Adelgid Volunteer Survey and Macrophyte Survey Programs.*

PRIORITY: Education, training and public participation

*Concentrate on the Educational priorities on next page.

ACTION: The Working Group will share educational information on priority species of concern to the public on the WQMA website, newsletter, and social media accounts and through other media such as radio and newspapers.

- *Provided educational information on invasive species to the WQMA Facebook account, WQMA webpage, WQMA newsletter, newspapers, radio and email.*
- *Articles in the second WQMA newsletter sent out May 30, 2025:*
 - *“Invasive Species Awareness Week.”*
 - *“Moravia Gives Back Day.”*
 - *“Partners Protecting Hemlocks for Watershed Health.”*
- *Article in the third WQMA newsletter sent out September 25, 2025:*
 - *“Conservation Field Days.”*
- *Article in the fourth WQMA newsletter sent out December 10, 2025:*
 - *“Hemlock Woolly Adelgid Survey.”*
- *Blog posts published on the WQMA website at <https://cayugacountywater.org/blog/>:*
 - *January 31, 2025: “Hydrilla monitoring and treatment in Cayuga Lake 2024” by Liz Kreitinger, Steward/Executive Director, Cayuga Lake Watershed Network.*
 - *February 13, 2025: “Partners Protecting Hemlock’s for Watershed Health” by Isaac Walker, Watershed Manager, Cayuga Lake Watershed Intermunicipal Organization.*
 - *June 6, 2025: “Invasive Species Awareness Week” by Natalie Stanton, Cayuga County Planning Department.*
 - *July 24, 2025: “AIS Surveys on Cayuga Lake” by Catherine Farrell and Claire McMahon, Finger Lake PRISM*
 - *September 26, 2025: “Look for Spotted Lanternfly,” by Sam Beck-Andersen, Coordinator, Finger Lakes PRISM*

ACTION: The Working Group will work with partners to prepare and publish two or more articles per year on invasive species.

- *Eco Talk Article in The Citizen “How hydrilla in Cayuga Lake is being handled, and how you can help” on August 8, 2025 available at https://auburnpub.com/life-entertainment/article_49a981e6-7d9c-4fbb-a04c-f9145168eb23.html.*
- *Eco Talk Article in The Citizen “Managing spotted lanternfly means managing this tree” on September 5, 2025 available at https://auburnpub.com/life-entertainment/article_13beeb4c-43a1-4f5f-9d23-1d35968babe2.html.*

ACTION: The Working Group will provide and promote invasive species training programs and activities.

- *Owasco Lake Watershed Management Council and WQMA staff hosted Moravia Gives Back Day at Fillmore Nature Preserve and taught Moravia Central School students about invasive species. The students also assisted with invasive species removal.*



- *Provided an educational information table on invasive species at the Bob Brower Scientific Symposium on March 8, 2025.*

- *Presented about invasive species to the students at Conservation Field Days.*



- *Provided a presentation on invasive species as part of Cayuga County Student Government Day.*

- *Created a Facebook post on the WQMA Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/CayugaCoWQMA>) on September 3, 2025 about using “Play.Clean.Go.” to protect our waterways from invasive species.*

- *Promoted the following:*

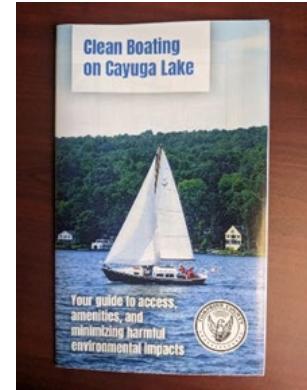
- *The Finger Lakes PRISM’s Spring Partner meeting that included a training on the Finger Lakes PRISM’s Macrophyte Survey Program.*
- *The Finger Lakes PRISM’s 2025 Watercraft Inspection Steward Program training.*
- *The Finger Lakes PRISM’s HWA Volunteer Survey.*
- *The Finger Lakes PRISM’s Trail Survey Program via Facebook.*
- *The Finger Lakes PRISM’s Fall Partner meeting.*
- *The “Spotted Lanternfly, Grapes and Tree of Heaven in the Finger Lakes: What You Need To Know” training held November 3, 2025.*

ACTION: The Working Group will provide a training or a control event as part of the New York State Invasive Species Awareness Week (NYSISAW).

- *Distributed the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's article "New York Invasive Species Awareness Week is June 9 - 15!"*
- *Shared New York Sea Grant Great Lakes' post on New York Invasive Species Awareness Week.*
- *Michele Wunderlich presented "Invasive Species in Cayuga County Update" at the June WQMA meeting.*

ACTION: The Working Group will work with partners such as FL-PRISM, the Skaneateles Lake Boat Launch Steward program and others on increasing invasive species education for boaters and recreationists. including education on "Clean. Drain. Dry.," "Play. Clean. Go.," and the promotion and monitoring of boat cleaning stations.

- *Cayuga County Department of Planning and Economic Development provided flyers promoting the use of the CD3 Boat Cleaning Station to Emerson Park staff to distribute to people launching their boats.*
- *Cayuga County utilized Finger Lakes Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance (FOLLOWPA) funds to reprint copies of the Cayuga Lake Clean Boating map and provided them to municipalities, marinas, Long Point State Park and the Cayuga County Tourism Office.*
- *Distributed the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's article "DEC Reminds Water Recreationists to 'Clean. Drain. Dry.' Watercraft and Equipment to Protect New York's Waters from Aquatic Invasive Species."*
- *Created a Facebook post on the WQMA Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/CayugaCoWQMA/>) on September 3, 2025 about using "Play.Clean.Go." to protect our waterways from invasive species.*



PRIORITY: Invasive species prevention, control and management

ACTION: The Working Group will support existing invasive species prevention, control and management programs in Cayuga County and the Finger Lakes Region.

- *Participated in the Central New York Water Chestnut Task Force.*
- *Participated in the Cayuga Lake Hydrilla Task Force and the New York State Hydrilla Task Force.*
- *Attended the Statewide PRISM meetings.*

**Educational Priorities of the Invasive Species Working Group for 2025:*

- “Clean. Drain. Dry.”
 - *Shared the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network Facebook post on September 1, 2025 on “Clean. Drain. Dry.”*
- “Play. Clean. Go.”
 - *Created a Facebook post on the WQMA Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/CayugaCoWQMA/>) on September 3, 2025 about using “Play.Clean.Go.” to protect our waterways from invasive species.*
- Surveying practices and best management practices for invasive species detection, prevention and control. How to volunteer to help remove invasive species from public lands and natural areas.
 - *WQMA Newsletter article “Partners Protecting Hemlocks for Watershed Health.”*
 - *WQMA Newsletter article “Hemlock Woolly Adelgid Survey.”*
- Avoid dumping aquariums or live bait into waterways.
- Clean your fishing equipment and don’t dump live bait.
- Buy firewood where you’ll burn it or gather on site when permitted.
- Buy forage, hay, gravel, and mulch that are certified as “weed-free.”
- Take extra care when traveling, gardening, or moving plant material. Buy your plants from a reputable source and plant native species to support your local ecosystem. Avoid using invasive plant species at all costs. Educate on Invasive Species Regulations (<https://dec.ny.gov/nature/invasive-species/resources-regulations/regulations>).