

Cayuga County Water Quality Management Agency
September 3, 2020 Meeting Minutes
Meeting conducted virtually on 8x8

Members or Designees Present: Doug Dello Stritto, Jeff Emerson, Seth Jensen, Doug Kierst, Ron Kuck, Stephen Lynch, Bruce Natale, Rick Nelson, Dale Powell, Ed Wagner, Carl Wiezalis

Others Present: Kathleen Bertuch, Adam Effler, Olivia Green, Pat Mooney, Emily Sheridan, Michele Wunderlich

Announcements

None.

Old Business

Minutes

The minutes from the July 2, 2020 WQMA meeting were reviewed. Seth Jensen made a motion to accept the July 2, 2020 minutes as written. Carl Wiezalis seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

New Business

Update WQMA Bylaws

Michele Wunderlich stated that there are two issues with the WQMA bylaws that members have asked to be addressed. The first is there is a request to allow designees for members other than the Environmental Advisors. The second is once Bruce Natale retires, there will no longer be a Solid Waste Management Program Administrator. It was determined that the members would send ideas to Michele Wunderlich regarding these two issues and it would be addressed at a future meeting.

WQMA Priority Working Groups Reports

Communication and Outreach Working Group

Michele Wunderlich reported that the quarterly newsletter will go out in September. She requested that people send their articles to Kaitlyn Shanahan who is organizing this issue.

Invasive Species Working Group

Michele Wunderlich reported the Asian clam survey was conducted on July 30th by herself, Drew Snell, Ed Wagner and Kaitlyn Shanahan. Results will be presented at a future meeting.

Nutrient-Sediment Working Group

Michele Wunderlich reported that she was told that the group would be meeting soon.

Agency Reports

Cayuga County Buildings and Grounds Department

Doug Dello Stritto reported that they are planting the buffer and other beds along the pathway on Deauville Island and plan to pave the trail in mid-September. They are working with Trowbridge Wolf Michaels Landscape Architects of Ithaca to design future development and the destination playground at the Park.

Cayuga County Department of Planning and Economic Development

Steve Lynch reported that the Department is working on a flood impact study for the Erie Canal Rewatering Project which extends from Port Byron to Weedsport. He also reported that Bruce Natale will be retiring at the end of October and they are working on a transition plan.

Bruce Natale reported that they have awarded the contract for the Phase 2 construction at Owasco Flats and they started work on August 18, 2020. They have been making good progress due to the dry weather.

Cayuga County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD)

Doug Kierst reported that they have done weed harvesting this summer in Owasco Lake, Cayuga Lake, Little Sodus Bay and Lake Como and they may try to get to Otter Lake. They have been installing projects as part of the Phase 2 Moravia Flood Mitigation Project. They have installed two basins to collect debris and will work on streambank stabilization around Oak Hill Road and Main Street. He reported that they have made educational videos on their weed harvester and forage harvesting. Finally they are working on the permits for a culvert replacement in Sempronius and remediation work at Scott Gulf Road in Moravia.

Cayuga County Solid Waste Management Program Office

Bruce Natale reported that they held a Freon collection event and they had 175 deliveries. The pre-scheduling worked well and they had 30 deliveries per half hour. He reported that there will be an electronics event on September 26, 2020 that has 600 slots and a household hazardous waste collection event on October 17, 2020. Both require pre-registration. Finally he reported that they are working on the County's solid waste management plan update.

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Cayuga County (CCE)

Ron Kuck reported that their STEM educator is working with OWLA. They are also working on food waste composting since it makes up 40% of garbage.

City of Auburn

Seth Jensen reported that they are finishing up the sewer GIS mapping this year and will begin again early next year. They are working on water main improvements on Dunning Avenue. He also reported that the zebra mussel control project is mostly complete; proposals are being reviewed and the NYSDEC has been consulted on the CSO improvements; the biosolids project bid process is underway; and in collaboration with the Cayuga County Health Department, they are testing wastewater for RNA associated with Covid-19.

Seth Jensen also reported that they have closed on the purchase of 150 acres in the south end of Owasco Lake off of Rockefeller Road (Jones Estate).

Seth Jensen reported that the water filtration staff have been busy due to the harmful algal blooms in Owasco Lake. They are working with the Cayuga County Health Department in the testing and analysis of the raw and treated drinking water. There have been low levels of toxins in the raw water but the finished water has been safe.

Lake Reports

Cayuga Lake Report

Kathy Bertuch reported that the Central New York Regional Planning and Development Board is working on identifying projects for Cayuga Lake watershed and then they will start ranking them. She reported that they had a call with the Cayuga Lake Intermunicipal Organization regarding investigation of opportunities to fund projects in the Cayuga Lake Watershed.

Cross Lake/Seneca River Report

Carl Wiezalis reported that water chestnuts are a huge problem. He stated that Onondaga County had some funds to help with the problem at the bottom of Cross Lake which included harvesting 160 tons and college students doing handpulling (4820 lbs) until harmful algal blooms occurred. He stated that there are large mats of water chestnuts floating down the river into the lake. He stated that they need education on how to manage the water chestnut. He also reported that they have piles of chlorella washing up on shore. Carl Wiezalis stated that Doug Kierst went on a boat ride to look at the scope and locations of the problems. Doug Kierst stated that it is a big problem and there are large rafts of weeds. He stated that he is looking into finding funding to help out next year.

Carl Wiezalis also reported that he watched a webinar from SIS Bio who has a proprietary system to address harmful algal blooms, weeds and sediment. He stated that they have a grant program with New York State.

Duck Lake Report

Dale Powell reported that Duck lake has been very busy. He reported that the lake is about a foot low due to the dry weather.

Owasco Lake Report

Rick Nelson reported that OWLA has six projects that they are working on. Work includes engaging politicians; increasing watershed signage in coordination with the Owasco Lake Watershed Inspection and Protection Division and Owasco Lake Watershed Management Council; installing lake friendly living and tributary signs; new guidance on lake friendly living; organizing a pick up trash day; planting trees; and working with teachers on water quality.

Rick Nelson also reported that he attended a presentation by EVIDN about the Owasco Lake Project which is based on a program used in Australia to improve water quality.

Skaneateles Lake Report

Kathy Bertuch reported that the contract to model the Skaneateles Lake Watershed is moving ahead but not in place at this time. She reported that the Central New York Regional Planning and Development Board has received approval for the public participation part of the grant. There will be online evaluation tools and a website. She stated that they are utilizing information from the local law analysis in the Owasco Lake Watershed Management and Waterfront Revitalization Plan. She also reported that the monitoring portion of the NYSDOS grant has gotten all the data and final report.

Partner Reports

NYSDEC Great Lakes Program

Emily Sheridan reported that the United States Department of the Interior's Invasive Species Management Plan is out for public comment and there are teleconferences in September if people want to learn more. She reported that the new State greenhouse gas limits law is also out for public comment. She reported that there will be a presentation of the Tug Hill Commission on the implementation of the Black River Watershed Management Plan on September 29, 2020. She also reported that the GLAA webinar series was well attended and webinars are available on their website.

Owasco Lake Watershed Management Council (OLWMC)

Adam Effler reported that harmful algal blooms are increasing in frequency in Owasco Lake. He reported that Sennett will be joining the OLWMC; they are working with OWLA on signage including cost sharing lake friendly living signs and stormwater medallions in Groton, Moravia and Locke; developed a lake friendly living pledge; are assisting with the installation of tributary level sensors; attended the EVIDN presentation; and procured an invasive species educational sign purchased through a grant from the Finger Lakes Partnership for Invasive Species Management. He also stated that they have written an article on Casowasco for the newsletter.

The Nature Conservancy

Olivia Green reported that they are closing on the second property as part of their source water land protection project which evaluated properties for water quality function and looks to protect those with high function. This property is across from Fillmore Glen State Park and will become part of the park for passive recreation. It has the headwaters of two streams as well as wetlands. The first property they closed on was a donation from the Parmley family and they worked with Cayuga County SWCD to seed it. She reported that EVIDN is making progress.

Doug Kierst made a motion to adjourn. Carl Wieszalis seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. The meeting was closed at 11:26 am.