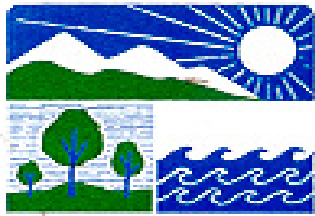


# 2008 STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT



Oswego County  
Environmental  
Management Council

**Submitted by the Oswego County Environmental Management  
Council**  
**May 19 , 2008**

**Oswego County EMC Website: [www.oswegocounty.com/planning/emc](http://www.oswegocounty.com/planning/emc)**

**Oswego County Environmental Management Council  
2008 State of the Environment Report**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Oswego County Environmental Management Council is a volunteer board, authorized for up to 15 members, established in 1971 by New York State Environmental Conservation Law and Resolution 86 of the Oswego County Legislature. Members are appointed by the Chairperson of the County Legislature. By resolution, the council was created “for the purpose of study and recommendations to this Body of procedures and programs which are deemed advisable and in the best public interest, for reviewing and advising local and state governments on matters pertaining to the use and conserving the environment for the protection of all the people...” As such, the EMC seeks to understand and promote the wise use and development of Oswego County’s natural resources.

Article 47 of the New York State Environmental Conservation Law defines the EMC’s primary mission as a review and advisory board to local and state government on matters affecting the protection, conservation, preservation and proper management of the natural resources of Oswego County. Section 47-0107 Paragraph 2 states, “*The council shall review the state of the county environment as a whole, and shall prepare and submit an annual report of its findings to the county’s governing body. This report also shall include an account of the council’s activities and accomplishments which shall be based on accurate records of its meetings and other works.*”

## **STATE OF THE OSWEGO COUNTY ENVIRONMENT**

### **1. General**

**Nuisance aquatic vegetation and invasive species:** Nuisance aquatic vegetation and invasive species continue to be a problem in Oswego County. Species such as Eurasian water milfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*), water chestnut (*Trapa natans*), purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*), giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*), Japanese knotweed (*Polygonum cuspidatum*), zebra mussel (*Dreissena polymorpha*), and round goby (*Neogobius melanstomus*) continue spread unchecked in many areas, impacting native organism habitats and food chains, recreational activities, and aesthetics.

In the past two years, pale swallow-wort (*Cynanchum rossicum*) has also been observed in a number of places, especially in the Town of New Haven. Control costs, including educational campaigns and eradication will continue to require major planning and economic consideration at both Town and County levels. This year, the St. Lawrence Eastern Lake Ontario Partnership for Regional Invasive Species

Management (SLELO PRISM) has added Oswego County to its service area. The PRISM is charged with coordinating efforts among all interested partners regarding prevention, early detection/rapid response, management, and education regarding invasive species of all types. New York State has budgeted up to \$150,000 this year for support of this effort. SLELO is seeking this funding to hire a coordinator, to be housed at The Nature Conservancy, and fund priority inventory and management projects. EMC has designated a representative to this body.

During 2006 and 2007, Oswego County Soil and Water District has applied a topical herbicide, Rodeo, on water chestnuts located at the Ox Creek/Oswego River area. In 2007 the Battle Island and Pathfinder Island areas in the Oswego River were also treated with Rodeo. A four to five year application is needed to give a true result of the effects of the herbicide.

**Wetlands and Wetlands Legislation:** Oswego County is home to many agricultural wetlands (particularly mucks) and isolated wetlands (many of which are vernal pools too small to come under the protection of the 1975 NYS Freshwater Wetlands Act, and which are essential breeding habitats for local amphibian populations). State and Federal actions in this arena will bear monitoring in the upcoming years.

Several EMC members are actively participating in the Marsh Monitoring Program (MMP). Bird Studies Canada, in partnership with Environment Canada, developed the Marsh Monitoring Program (MMP) in Ontario in 1994. With the financial support of the United States Environmental Protection Agency, Great Lakes National Program Office and the Great Lakes Protection Fund, the MMP was launched throughout the U.S. Great Lakes States in 1995. Carried out by a network of volunteer surveyors, the MMP functions to provide long-term monitoring of marsh-dependent bird, frog, and toad species in marsh habitats throughout the Great Lakes basin. Data collected by MMP volunteers is used to determine long-term trends in species diversity, occurrence and abundance, and to directly inform and guide conservation, restoration and management programs for marshes and their bird and amphibian inhabitants.

**Hazardous waste sites:** Several inactive or delisted hazardous waste sites currently exist in the County. Among them are the PAS site in Oswego, the Fulton Terminals site in Fulton, and the Clothier site in Granby. These sites are a result of activities at the former Pollution Abatement Services (PAS) property in Oswego in the 1970's and 1980's. The EPA remediation plan for the sites includes regular monitoring to ensure hazardous materials are not leaching from the sites. The zoning and location of some of these sites as industrial areas may make them favorable for future re-development.

Any such re-development will need to be assessed in relation to the previous presence of hazardous materials at these locations.

The County Department of Planning and Community Development recently received U.S. Environmental Protection Agency grant money to evaluate brownfield sites along the Oswego River Corridor for re-development and possible return to the tax base as

viable properties. In 2004, several sites were identified and investigated. A final list of 14 sites (7 with petroleum based contamination and 7 with other chemical contamination) was established. The sites will eventually be remediated and released for development. Parameters considered in choosing the sites include distribution in the project area, site size, marketability, public versus private ownership and historic significance.

In 2005, Brownfield/EPA Phase 1 studies were completed for seven sites in the Oswego River Corridor, including Dix Sunoco (Phoenix), Fulton Mall (two sites), SOFCO (Fulton), Flex-o Wire (Oswego), Fitzgibbons Boilerworks (Oswego) and Oswego Stevedoring. Phase 1 studies in progress include 62 N 5<sup>th</sup> Street (Fulton), Building 80 (A.L. Lee Memorial Hospital, Fulton), Leto Island (Oswego), and Oneida Street (Fulton – four sites). In 2006 eight Phase II ESAs were recommended to the US EPA for approval. The cities of Fulton and Oswego received \$193,500 and \$250,000 respectively to complete Phase II studies on some of these previously identified sites.

**Household hazardous wastes:** In the past, the EMC has promoted and participated in the establishment and implementation of an annual Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) collection day at local landfills and transfer stations. According to Division of Solid Waste data, Oswego County has held 26 successful HHW collection programs since 1990. This event routinely attracted long lines of local residents desiring to dispose of hazardous consumer products in an environmentally suitable manner. County officials decided to no longer fund this event in 2002. As a result, the potential for illegal disposal (roadside dumping, household trash, discharge into streams, wetlands, storm sewers or household drains) and open burning increased significantly. This poses a serious threat to the health of individuals and the environment due to the extreme toxicity of many of these products.

In a 2006 EMC report to the County Legislature, several potential funding opportunities to help defray the costs of HHW collection were identified. In response to concerns expressed by the EMC and other county groups, the County Legislature approved funding to reestablish the household hazardous waste collection days in 2007. The events resulted in the collection of 150,000 pounds of hazardous waste and 120,000 pounds of electronic goods. The total cost was \$130,000, of which 50% (\$65,000) will be reimbursed by New York State. In addition, the County is planning to build structures to allow year-round drop off of HHW in the future.

**Oil and gas drilling:** As of 2005, approximately 25,000 acres of land in the County have been leased for their oil and gas mineral rights by outside interests. While very few sites have undergone any development at this time, there is potential for environmental impacts (habitat destruction, aesthetic degradation, fire, and chemical spills among others) from access road construction and drilling activities should any of

these sites be developed. Review of applications to DEC for the development of such leases will be needed to identify and mitigate possible impacts.

**Wildlife corridors:** Current definitions emphasize that a wildlife corridor is a linear landscape element which serves as a linkage between historically connected habitat/natural areas, and is meant to facilitate movement between these natural areas. As open spaces have become divided up and isolated from each other, wildlife corridors have become increasingly important in allowing movement of plant and animal species from one place to another. Several recent studies have confirmed that such corridors have been successfully used by many species. The continued pursuit of additional development in the County (such as the proposed coal gasification project in Scriba along the Lake Ontario shoreline) needs to be managed in relation to the preservation of open space and wildlife corridors, with development planned to mitigate impacts to these valuable habitats and improve the quality of life for County residents.

## **2. Salmon River Corridor and Tug Hill**

### **A. Salmon River Bio-Inventory**

According to the Salmon River Greenway Corridor Bio-Inventory Final Report, prepared for the EMC by Dru Associates, "The Salmon River corridor is among the State's most physically unique and biologically diverse ecosystems. It is distinguished by its geological origin, hydrological functioning and ecological richness."

Within the corridor, whenever a major development activity occurs, there is potential for several problems, including erosion and sedimentation, habitat loss and degradation, physical and hydrological changes, nutrient loading, introduction of toxic substances, increased water temperature, and increased or uncontrolled flooding. As the report noted, such physical changes could in turn trigger other ecological impacts such as algal blooms, changes to water chemistry and dissolved oxygen levels, and changes in species composition. These impacts are potentially devastating to cold water systems like the Salmon River. The report states, "These changes are not noticeable at the start, but once a decline in species begins, it can be irreversible."

The report identified many land use activities that would represent problem sources in the corridor in both riverine and upland habitats. These include unchecked construction and development, density of development, logging and forest clearing, industrial and storm water discharge, roadway runoff and deicing activities, mining, agriculture and recreational activities. The report states, "In the case of habitats which

are directly linked to the River's water quality, it is not only the impacts of lost habitat (and the species which live in those patches) that are affected, but there is also the potential for direct impacts to the fishery and avifauna associated with it."

The report outlines several protection strategies, including ecologically sound regional planning. This should be used to "preserve large, central tracts for forested and wetland habitat to prevent the loss of species which are sensitive, and maintain the species richness and diversity of the River ecosystem." Other management strategies identified are sound fisheries management, enforcement of current wetlands and water quality regulations, use of the SEQR process, and implementation of State and Federal natural resource programs.

The report also recommended further studies to include field work conducted in all four seasons to better identify species in need of protection, field checking of air photo map interpretations to confirm accuracy, and a thorough inventory of wetlands in the corridor. Due to their importance to several amphibian species, this inventory should include vernal pools and other smaller wetlands not identified on the DEC wetland maps.

A more intensive inventory, the Salmon River Watershed Natural Resources Assessment, has now been completed by the New York Natural Heritage Program in the Salmon River Watershed. NYSDEC along with other partners in the project have completed a viability analysis of the watershed based on the Natural Heritage Inventory. Also a series of public participation workshops were held with NYSDEC and partners identifying targets, threats, and strategies. A final assessment report will be produced and distributed in the spring of 2008 to the participant agencies, county, town, village governments, and the public.

## B. DEC Initiatives

State efforts to acquire former Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation land within the corridor have now been negotiated as part of a legal settlement and will become finalized in 2008 / 2009. Surveying of the properties is ongoing along with other technical aspects of finalizing the acquisition process. Acquisition of these parcels by the state is essential in helping control the threat of unrestricted development within the corridor and for the protection of this unique resource. The areas acquired will increase public fishing, hunting, and recreational opportunities while still providing protection of the resource. Areas in the acquisition will be designated as State Forest Lands and continue to pay taxes to the local communities. Once in DEC ownership long term plans are to link the corridor by developing a hiking trail from Redfield to Pulaski where possible.

The DEC has completed work on improving access to the Salmon River Reservoir. This included relocating and upgrading the boat launch in Redfield and construction of a new fishing pier that is accessible for those with disabilities. The projects were

completed using NYSDEC Habitat Access Stamp funding and line item funding from State Senator Jim Wright. Work still to be completed includes improvements to the Redfield Island Day Use Area adjacent to the new launch and the old boat launch, which will be redeveloped into a car top launch and day use area.

Work including bank stabilization of about a half mile of river adjacent to the Salmon River Hatchery and downstream to the Lower Fly Fishing Area has been completed. The work was done using the most up to date natural stream morphology methods available and was conducted under the supervision of NYSDEC and the USFWS. Work was completed in the summer of 2006. Work came in under budget and as a result plans were developed to restore another section of river above the Salmon River Hatchery in 2007.

In the summer of 2007 the NYSDEC completed a second stream bank restoration project in the Upper Fly Fishing Area of the Salmon River that also included the construction of a new public access parking area and trail development. This project once again came under budget so plans are being made for a third project in 2008/2009. Also plans have been initiated for further trail development and other enhancements including a viewing deck at the bottom of the gorge trail at the Salmon River Falls. The Adirondack Mountain Club [ADK] has done the design and cost analysis and will be contracted to do the work in 2008/2009.

The DEC is still actively looking for and pursuing opportunities within the Salmon River Corridor where acquisition or conservation easements with willing land owners can take place. NYSDEC is considering a project to acquire lands adjoining future state lands scheduled to be acquired from National Grid and other parties. The purpose of the project is to consolidate the ownership of the parcels with future State Forest lands for improved protection of the river corridor and to provide additional public access to those lands. Acquisition would be consistent with the New York State Open Space Plan and would only be pursued as a friendly purchase from a willing seller. The property would be paid for with funds from the Environmental Protection Fund. In accordance with Environmental Conservation Law [Section 54-0303] whenever funding from that source is used to acquire land not specifically listed on a prior state land acquisition plan, the town where the land is located must be offered the opportunity to object to the acquisition.

It was announced in 2007 that 325 million dollars from the Environmental Protection Fund may be transferred to the General Fund because of the state deficit. The Environmental Protection Fund is a dedicated funding source for projects such as land acquisition. This could have serious impacts on acquisitions as it has been stated that it may be two or three years before funding is available. Time is often the essence of successful acquisition, and any delay provides the opportunity for outside interests such as developers to move in and acquire what may be ecologically sensitive areas that would be better held in public trust.

In 2004, NYSDEC initiated a Salmon River Watershed Biodiversity and Ecological Habitat Assessment in order to assess the condition of natural resources within the 173,000 acre Salmon River Watershed. The Tug Hill Commission is facilitating the project and administering grant funds awarded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Field work conducted by the NY Natural Heritage Program (which is a partnership between the Nature Conservancy and NYSDEC) has been completed.

Based on work from the assessment, a Natural Resource Targets workshop was held on September 25, 2006. The objective of the workshop was to identify 3-8 natural resource targets that represent the full range of biodiversity within the watershed. A viability analysis of the identified targets was conducted from October 2006 through March 2007. This analysis gathered information from published and unpublished reports and interviews with scientists and resource managers to assess the current condition of each identified natural resource target.

A threats analysis workshop was conducted in May 2007. The objective of the workshop was to identify threats to the long term health and viability of the previously identified targets. A strategies workshop was conducted in June 2007 to identify specific strategies to abate these threats. A series of public information meetings to present a draft report and to solicit feedback from interested members of the general public were held in August and September 2007. Work continued through the fall of 2007, resulting in a final assessment report that local towns, village boards, and government agencies within the watershed can utilize for strategic planning and conservation needs.

After 23 years of legal procedures and scientific study, Occidental Chemical agreed to pay NYS a \$12 million settlement for damage to Lake Ontario and its fisheries caused by its Hooker Chemical manufacturing plant in Niagara Falls. NYSDEC has received the money through the Lake Ontario Natural Resources Damages settlement and it will be used for fisheries restoration projects along Lake Ontario and its tributaries. The money will be distributed over a four year period. Projects in Oswego County that ranked high for funding include renovations to the Salmon River Hatchery water supply, high tech fish marking equipment that will allow fisheries managers to distinguish wild naturally reproduced salmonids from hatchery stock, and stream bank restoration, trail development, and public access along the Salmon River. Projects to be funded were announced in January 2008 and all of the Salmon River Projects were accepted for funding.

NYSDEC is actively involved in trying to stop the spread of the fish disease Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia (VHS). Fish kills along Lake Ontario, Lake Erie and the St. Lawrence River occurred in 2006 and were identified as being caused by VHS. Fish affected were warm and cool water species such as round goby and bass. VHS is classified as a reportable disease by the World Organization for Animal Health. This disease is not harmful to humans. Salmon and trout tested at the NYSDEC Salmon River Hatchery were disease free as was the hatchery itself. Regulations controlling

the sale of baitfish and transfer to other waters outside the Great Lakes have been initiated to try and stop the spread of the disease.

### C. Tug Hill

Early in 2002 the Nature Conservancy and the NYS DEC announced that they had negotiated the purchase of 45,000 acres of the Tug Hill core forest. Most of the area purchased is in DEC Region 6, with only a small portion in Region 7, which encompasses Oswego County. However, the purchase will help protect the watershed and headwaters of the Salmon River and its tributary streams, so there is a net environmental benefit to Oswego County from the transaction. The area was not removed from the tax rolls, and will remain open to the public for hunting and fishing, providing enhanced recreational opportunities in the area.

#### D. Other

Potential threats to the Salmon River Corridor and Tug Hill that will need review, monitoring and evaluation in the near future include:

- Snowmobile use, especially in Tug Hill region, has resulted in an increased winter population, which in turn requires more services (gas stations, restaurants, etc.). Increased residential and seasonal camp development will have associated increases in solid waste, water supply needs and septic issues.
- ATV operation on County and State lands raises environmental concerns including degradation of trails and landscape due to ruts, soil erosion, clogging of culverts and sedimentation problems in adjacent waterways, as well as trespassing onto adjacent private lands.
- Invasive species, both aquatic and terrestrial, need to be monitored and a threat assessment determined.
- Water withdrawal projects, such as the one proposed by Nestle Waters of North America Inc. for the Tug Hill Aquifer, need to be monitored and a threat assessment determined. State regulations need to be enacted for mandatory base flows in all streams. A USGS study of the Tug Hill Aquifer needs to be funded in order to have a better understanding of the possible impacts such water withdrawals could have on the streams, wetlands, and the aquatic environment of the region. Enactment of the Great Lakes Annex, which would regulate water withdrawals from the watershed, needs to be ratified by all the bordering states and Congress. Loopholes that do not address the withdrawal of bottled drinking water (which is exempt because they are less than 5.8 gallons individually) need to be closed.

### **3. Oswego River Corridor**

#### A. General Setting

Over the past several years, the EMC has been active with many groups and programs involving the Oswego River Corridor, including the Oswego River Remedial Action Plan (RAP). The Oswego River watershed includes the Finger Lakes, industries, the city of Syracuse and other municipalities, and extensive areas of farmland and forest, and encompasses an area of over 5,000 square miles. The Oswego River is second only to the Niagara River in size as a tributary to Lake Ontario. Upstream pollutants are known to have traveled through the river and harbor, and impacted the Lake Ontario ecosystem. The Oswego River still has Mirex contamination from previous industrial activities along its shoreline. Oswego County is the only local body addressing problems within the river corridor.

In July 2006 the Lower Oswego River and Harbor were delisted as a Great Lakes Area of Concern (AOC) by the International Joint Commission due to the efforts of several state and local groups and agencies. The delisting of the Oswego Harbor and the river up to the Varick Dam is addressed as an AOC under other programs.

This was the first delisting in the United States. The Oswego River AOC delisting was the result of actions taken to resolve beneficial use impairments, such as fish habitat and populations, eutrophication, improved control of water flow, and control of point and nonpoint discharges.

## B. Brownfield Assessments

Brownfields are defined as abandoned, idled or underused properties where expansion or redevelopment is complicated by real or perceived hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminants. A project entitled *The Oswego Canal Transformation Project: An Old Pathway to a New Economy* was implemented under the auspices of the Department of Planning and Community Development in the 2004. The objective of this project was to use Assessment Grant funds to perform environmental assessments on the most critical brownfield sites within the Corridor. The project identified the most critical sites through a standardized process of inventorying sites within the Corridor and prioritizing those sites based on key community and municipal objectives. The two objectives of this project were: (1) evaluate sites which are petroleum contaminated and (2) evaluate sites that are contaminated with non-petroleum or hazardous substances.

In 2005, Brownfield/EPA Phase 1 studies were completed for 23 sites in the Oswego River Corridor with 22 sites approved for Phase 1 ESAs. These included Dix Sunoco (Phoenix), Fulton Mall (two sites), SOFCO (Fulton), Flex-o Wire (Oswego), Fitzgibbons Boilerworks (Oswego) and Oswego Stevedoring. Phase 1 studies in progress include 62 N 5<sup>th</sup> Street (Fulton), Building 80 (A.L. Lee Memorial Hospital,

Fulton), Leto Island (Oswego), and Oneida Street, Fulton (four sites). A Community Brownfield Advisory Group (CBAG) has been appointed to serve as an advisory board for the project. With Brownfield funding, the County has acquired Pictometry data

(digital aerial photographs which are georeferenced and vertically and horizontally accurate) for a 2-mile wide corridor of the Oswego River.

The City of Fulton has submitted plans to the NYSDEC and USEPA for Remedial Investigation/Remedial Alternatives Evaluation for the properties located at 60 N 5<sup>th</sup> St. (site 78) and 308 Harrison St. (Site 14A). Both sites have been awarded funding through the NYSDEC Environmental Restoration Program. The county submitted a third application to the NYSDEC requesting additional funding for the City of Oswego through the ERP for property located at 68 W First St. (Site 57). The City of Oswego was awarded funding in the amount of \$169,200 in September 2007. In addition, the city applied for over \$12 million in funding through RESTORE NY Communities Initiative for redevelopment of two properties including 68 West First Street.

In 2006 eight Phase II ESAs were recommended to the US EPA for approval. The City of Fulton's Brownfield Opportunity Area Request for Proposal (BOA & RFP) was approved by the NYSDOS and NYSDEC. Bid submittals were received by the county at the end of June 2007. In September 2007, the LaBarge Group of Albany was awarded the contract. Upon approval by the NYSDOS and NYSDEC the contract will be finalized. In March 2008 the City of Fulton was awarded a \$193,500 Brownfield Opportunity Area grant and the City of Oswego was awarded a \$250,000 BOA grant. The grants will be used to begin Phase II studies of some of the previously identified sites.

The County submitted one Hazardous Substance and one Petroleum Community-wide USEPA BOA Grant Proposal in October 2007. The funding would be put towards assessment and redevelopment of properties located outside the Canal Corridor. The county received USEPA approval in May 2007 for additional sites along East First Street and Utica Street in Oswego. The City of Fulton has contracted ENSR as their environmental consultant for properties located at 60 North Fifth Street and 308 Harrison Street. In addition, the County has been authorized to apply for additional brownfield assessment funding through the EPA.

### C. Shoreline Erosion

Residents along the river continue to be concerned over erosion and other shoreline impacts from the wake of boats using the river. Over the past several years, the EMC has developed educational materials and promoted boater awareness of the impacts of boat wakes, and the wake regulations applicable on the river. The EMC has promoted use of native vegetation by shoreline residents to restore riparian habitats and to help mitigate the effects of wake erosion along the river shore. This is likely to continue to be an issue over the next several years.

In 2004, the Department of Planning and Community Development received the Oswego River Shoreline Restoration Program Habitat Evaluation Design report from Dru Associates. The report outlines a quantitative model that can be used to easily

evaluate a property's condition with respect to wildlife use and bank stabilization. According to the report, the aim of this initiative is to "show riverside landowners how to increase their property values for wildlife and improve stream bank stabilization through a program that teaches and rewards landowners for undertaking actions that stabilize or restore riparian habitats that 'mimic' the original native shorelines."

#### D. Other Corridor Initiatives

Friends of Great Bear is group of residents of Oswego County interested in the conservation and protection of the Great Bear property. This unique area is owned by the City of Fulton, which has its municipal water wells on site. Additional adjacent property is owned by the Town of Volney. A diversity of flora and fauna can be found on the property and the bordering Oswego River and Canal. In cooperation with the City of Fulton and Town of Volney, the group's goals are the advocacy of the preservation and protection of this natural environment so that the public may share and make use of the property wisely as a recreational resource. During the 2007 season, trails were color coded and marked. New bridges were built across streams.

In December 2007, the Town of Volney applied for an Environmental Protection Fund grant for a Local Waterfront Revitalization Program to develop Volney Canalfront Park on the Oswego River, adjacent to the City of Fulton Great Bear property.

#### **4. Lake Neatahwanta**

Lake Neatahwanta in the City of Fulton and Town of Granby has been under evaluation for over 15 years by the Lake Neatahwanta Reclamation Committee to diagnose the causes of its water quality problems, and to develop possible remediation solutions.

The committee funded a preliminary study by ECO-LOGIC Environmental. This study determined that the lake is experiencing cultural eutrophication due primarily to high phosphorus levels. The primary remediation goal is to reduce algae and suspended sediment levels to allow swimming and other recreational activities. Watershed management strategies proposed by consultants include dredging, constructed wetlands to help filter and retain sediments and nutrients, riparian restoration along tributary streams, and possible in-lake bio-manipulation of the food chains. Following EPA guidelines and Best Management Practices (BMP), Federal monies have been received to begin the process. The CNY Regional Planning and Development Board has assisted the committee in moving ahead with its \$750,000 Federal grant. The Committee began implementation of its initial plans and the dispersal of project funds in May 2007. Early efforts focused on watershed improvements, with a goal of having programs in place by September 2007.

A project coordinator position was established at Cornell Cooperative Extension of Oswego County as part of the EPA Grant to manage the installation of the BMP's. Over 50 BMP's had been identified on agricultural properties throughout the

watershed that would act to reduce the sediment and nutrient loading to the lake and its tributaries. In 2007, twenty of the BMP's planned in the watershed were engineered and installed or implemented. Throughout the winter of 2008, engineering will be completed on most of the remaining BMP's and they will be installed throughout the rest of the year. Funding for all of these BMP's and project coordinator assistance as provided by the US EPA, must be spent by December 2008. If no further funding is secured for the project, the majority of agricultural improvements for water quality in Lake Neatahwanta Watershed will end at that time.

BMP's in the watershed that are in various stages of completion include:

- Watering Facilities - Helps to spread out animals and reduce erosion
- Pipeline - Delivers water to watering facilities
- Pasture and Hay Plantings - Converts land from corn to hay, causing less erosion
- Roof Runoff Structures - Prevents clean roof water from picking up nutrients
- Heavy Use Area Protection - Minimizes erosion in busy barnyard areas
- Road Culvert Pipe - Stabilizes erosion around culvert
- Stream Crossing - Provides stable and erosion free stream crossing
- Animal Trails and Walkways - Minimizes traffic in erosion prone areas
- Manure Transfer Facility - Safely handles large amounts of animal waste
- Farm Driveway Improvements - Minimizes erosion on farm driveway
- Diversion - Moves water away from critically eroding areas
- Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan - Provides whole nutrient plan for farm
- Grassed Waterway - Moves water to minimize erosion
- Soil Sampling - Needed to complete Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan
- Manure Sampling - Needed to complete Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan
- Filtering System Bark Chips - Filtering system for milk house wash water
- Stone Dust/Step Stabilization - Allows animals to drink water without entering stream
- Pond - Allows suspended sediments to drop out of water
- Culvert Replacements - Stabilizes culverts and surrounding stream banks
- Channel Vegetation - Reduces erosion of stream banks
- Stone Check Dams - Slows water and allows sediment to drop out before entering lake
- Reduced Tillage Technology - Reduces soil erosion
- Cover Crop - Reduces erosion
- Riparian Forest Buffer - Filters out nutrients and reduces soil erosion on stream banks

Many of these BMP's are being completed on more than one property which is why there are not over fifty separate BMP's listed. It was also established that all

participating land owners involved would be recognized with property signage, designating their participation, to be placed on their property.

Community outreach and education regarding the Lake Neatahwanta Reclamation Project is in process. In 2007, Katy Green, Lake Neatahwanta Project Coordinator, made presentations to a variety of community groups regarding the lake and its water quality issues. The groups included the Fulton Lions Club, the Fulton Girl Scouts, the Cayuga Community College Fulton Campus Conservation Class, and the Fulton YMCA summer camp. Be it noted also that the project coordinator implemented a public forum event at the Lake Neatahwanta site which turned out some public participation and a number of questions that were answered to most everyone's satisfaction. Most questions were pertaining to the eutrophic nature and biology/chemistry of the lake and the system.

In March 2007, a workshop was held for agricultural producers in the watershed where the topic discussed was nutrient and manure management. Additionally, in September a Community Lake Day was held at Bullhead Point on the lakeshore and was open to anyone who was interested in learning about the current reclamation efforts. Additionally, due to the fact that invasive water chestnut was found in the lake for the first time in 2007, the district manager from the Oswego County Soil and Water Conservation District gave a presentation regarding water chestnut as it relates to Lake Neatahwanta.

In total, over 200 people attended at least one of these educational events related to the lake in 2007. Upcoming community education events include, a storm drain stenciling campaign where all storm drains that drain to the lake unfiltered from the City of Fulton will be stenciled with the message "Dump no Waste, Drains to Lake." Residents of these neighborhoods will also be given information regarding the water quality problems in the lake and how they can prevent their water quality impacts. Additionally, the Lake Neatahwanta Trail Extension, which will be completed with a grant provided to the City of Fulton, will include educational signage about the lake and buffer plantings to reduce erosion and improve water quality on the lakeshore in the City of Fulton.

## **5. Lake Ontario Coastline and Adjacent Upland Areas**

According to NYS Department of State's 1989 Dune Management Study, the sand dunes along the eastern shore of Lake Ontario are an integral part of a coastal barrier environment that consists of beaches, sand dunes, embayments and wetlands. This barrier system, which extends for roughly 17 miles, contains the largest and most extensive freshwater sand dune formations in New York State, and is among the most extensive in the northeast. The dune system contains several rare or unique habitats with associated threatened and endangered species.

The dune wetland complex has been identified as a Biodiversity Investment Area under the State of the Lakes Ecosystem Conference (SOLEC), sponsored by USEPA and Environment Canada. DEC recognizes several significant fish and wildlife

habitats within the complex, and the NYS Department of State has delineated several significant coastal fish and wildlife habitats within the complex as well. It is also a priority conservation site within the Nature Conservancy's Binational Blueprint for Conservation of the Great Lakes. In 2007, the DEC designated the Eastern Lake Ontario Dunes and Wetlands Complex as a Natural Heritage Area. Details are available at: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/38944.html>

#### A. Selkirk Fen

In 2005, Selkirk Fen, immediately to the east of Brennan Beach, and south of Deer Creek Wildlife Management Area, was transferred to the State of New York, to be managed by DEC. Brennan Beach has completed the septic system upgrades required at that time by DEC. Scientists have been cordially welcomed to access the wetland through the campground property. The bog buckmoth (*Hemileuca sp.*) population (New York Endangered) has been monitored there for three years now. The 2006 flight was the best there to date, and the 2007 flight was also strong. The data now demonstrate that the bog buckmoth population in Selkirk Fen is the largest of the six known colonies in Oswego County (and so, also in New York).

Bog turtle (*Glyptemys muhlenbergii*) (Federal Threatened, New York Endangered) research is also in its third year. The SUNY Oswego has request for State Wildlife Grant funding for continuation of these research efforts was denied, as was the request for funding for removal of an invasive shrub, glossy buckthorn (*Frangula alnus*), that threatens the habitat conditions for all rare plants and animals that occur in the site. The Oswego County Sportsman's Federation has requested funding on DEC's behalf from Entergy for the glossy buckthorn removal, as well as removal of pale swallow-wort from Deer Creek Marsh Wildlife Management Area.

#### B. Basin-wide Collaboration

As a follow-up to the October 2006 first ever Great Lakes Dune Conference, sponsored by the Oswego office of New York Sea Grant, the annual International Association of Great Lakes Research meeting (held in late May 2007) featured a session on dunes. New York sent two participants, who presented posters on the Eastern Lake Ontario Dune Steward Program, Lake Ontario occurrences of Great Lakes dunes, and Champlain beachgrass (*Ammophila breviligulata*), the New York endangered species that stabilizes our eastern Lake Ontario dunes.

The Sandy Pond Channel Maintenance Association, a private, not-for-profit grassroot organization, raised funding once more to dredge the Sandy Pond channel. Management of this channel has reached a critical point, and there is a need for an in-depth study to development sustainable alternatives for long term management

#### C. Planning

1. The Ontario Dune Coalition, a partnership of about 30 public and private organizations with common interest in the preservation and optimum use of the Eastern Lake Ontario dune system, with respect for private property, has commissioned an update of the NYS Department of State 1989 Eastern Lake Ontario Dune Management Study. The report was nearly complete in 2006, and has been presented to Dune Coalition members, but a full draft is yet to be received. The report has set forth a 16 point stewardship vision for stewardship of the dune system, together with a strategy for implementing the vision over the next decade. Highlights of the vision include:

- Recognition that the dunes and wetlands they shelter are one system and the goal is to develop widespread public appreciation of the system;
- Active management should aim to benefit the resource, as well as local residents, visitors, and the general public;
- Coordination of the work and interests of all entities is crucial;
- Management plans are needed for the various public properties, and these plans should reflect balance between conservation and beneficial use;
- Regulation should address issues of public health, safety, and welfare, and include dealing with the potential impacts of flooding and erosion, as well as motorized water traffic;
- Activities should seek sustainable economic benefits, while considering the issues of carrying capacity and cumulative impacts;
- Shoreline management should respect the natural protective features and use non-structural methods as much as possible.
- Planning should occur at the municipal and county level as well, especially for inlet management at Sandy Pond;
- Adequate funds should be developed for effective planning and management;
- All plans need to allow for response to changing conditions.

2. Additional Planning efforts underway in the Eastern Lake Ontario include:

- Comprehensive Plan for Pulaski/Richland (contractor is CNY Regional Planning and Development Board);
- Comprehensive Plan for the Town of Sandy Creek (contractor is CNY Regional Planning and Development Board);
- Salmon River Watershed Plan (contractors are Tug Hill Commission and The Nature Conservancy);

- Sandy/South Sandy Creek Watershed project (contractors are Tug Hill Commission and The Nature Conservancy). While the watersheds of Sandy and South Sandy Creek lie to the north of Oswego County, this project includes the shoreline beaches and dunes as well as the watersheds of Deer Creek, Little Sandy Creek, Lindsey Creek, and Skinner Creek, all of which lie largely within the County. Scientists and interested members of the community have been involved in meetings to give input to selecting conservation targets and evaluating threats to the system.

#### D. Education

The Eastern Lake Ontario dune system and the adjacent Salmon River Corridor support significant holdings of public conservation lands. Both areas are prized for public recreation. Within Oswego County, these resources include Deer Creek Marsh Wildlife Management Area and Sandy Pond Beach Natural Area, as well as Sandy Island Beach State Park and State Forest holdings in the Salmon River Corridor. In 2005, NYS Department of State outsourced education of its public recreation users of both systems to New York Sea Grant through a five year agreement to fund a Coordinated Steward Program. In 2007, Sea Grant fielded four, six month Salmon River Stewards and five summer Dune Stewards. The mission of the Stewards is to educate visitors to use the areas in an environmentally responsible way. The response to the program has been very favorable, from the standpoint of both land managers and resource users.

In addition, New York Sea Grant has received funding to develop "Traveling Trunks", an education program geared to middle school aged children. The project is nearly completed, and will be available to the public by mid-2008. Each trunk will be a plastic tote filled with materials for a hands-on lesson on dunes. Materials cover birds, fish, muskrats, plants, the bog buckmoth, sediment, and invasive species. Twenty trunks will be distributed among school districts and various other venues where leaders of children's groups may access them. The trunks will come with lesson plans and information on all covered topics.

## 6. Phoenix/Schroepfel Area

The Village of Phoenix and Town of Schroepfel have a history of water concerns, including water supply and quality, proposed water districts, and zoning issues regarding minimum lot size requirements to protect the extensive Sand Ridge aquifer. Based on 2000 census data, parts of the Village of Phoenix and Town of Schroepfel fall within the Syracuse urban area as defined by the new Phase II Storm Water Regulations. As such, the Town and Village have been designated as municipal

storm sewer systems (MS4), requiring them to implement education and management practices to protect the quality of local water bodies. Progress is being accomplished with new water lines, new water districts and new sewage lines being established, and a new water tower completed and online. With the proposed development of

Destiny USA in northern Onondaga County (a retail, research and tourism center, which would include the largest shopping mall in the United States), as well as suburban sprawl from Syracuse, there may be increased pressure for development to the north, into the Phoenix/Schroepfel area. Such development will require detailed assessment and planning to ensure the continuation of a high quality water supply to the residents of the southern part of Oswego County.

Of potential impact to the Phoenix/Schroepfel and other downstream Oswego River communities is the new waste treatment facility to be built near Armory Square in Syracuse. During heavy precipitation events, the rebuilt waste water treatment facility on Hiawatha Boulevard could not handle the combined storm sewer overflow and residential waste water. The treatment facility had to discharge to Onondaga Lake, which then drains north ultimately to the Oswego River. If predicted development associated with Destiny USA transpires, it is essential that any new facility be sized and designed to handle high inflow conditions to reduce the need to discharge partially or untreated effluent into local water bodies.

## **7. Sandy Creek/Lacona and Mexico Area Wellfields**

The Towns of Sandy Creek, Lacona and Mexico have all investigated identifying and developing new wellfields as municipal water sources to support the increasing needs of their residents. The EMC previously delineated the current municipal wellfields and recharge areas for Sandy Creek/Lacona, and provided recommendations regarding associated compatible development within the various recharge zones. Similar information would be very beneficial for any new wellfield development in these towns, as well as for other wellfields presently in use throughout the County. This will become even more beneficial as towns, and perhaps even the County, establish new water districts in the future. Previously, the EMC was able to accomplish these studies using grant money with matching funds from the involved municipalities. With the loss of EMC funding at the County level, the EMC will likely not be able to support these types of studies in the near term.

## **8. Oneida Lake North Shore**

### **A. Land Use**

Real estate speculators are buying large parcels of forest land north of Oneida Lake, especially near water bodies. Often they are then harvesting the timber without regard for sustained yield, subdividing the land, and marketing it to buyers in large urban areas around the country. These forest blocks are being fragmented, taken out of production, and many are being occupied by low value structures that exploit a

loophole in the state building code. A memorandum of understanding from the New York Department of State defines a classification of building referred to as "Group U" that is not required to conform to the standards set forth in the Uniform Fire Prevention and Building Code for residential structures. One caveat of the definition is

that these structures can not have plumbing, sinks, toilets, or utilities of any kind. Mixed use development is spreading along major roadways into townships that have little or no land use control. The absence of planning and zoning in these communities allows a chaotic and inefficient development pattern to occur. In some places, public utilities are being extended into these unplanned areas without consideration of the impact of the consequential development.

## B. Nuisance/Invasive Species

The north shore of Oneida Lake (the largest body of water wholly within New York State) forms a large part of the southeast border of the county, and represents a major recreation area for residents and visitors. The lake supports populations of at least three invasive plants. Eurasian milfoil has been documented in the lake since the 1970s, although its population appears to have been kept in check by a non-native insect (*Acentria*) which feeds on the plant. Water chestnut appeared in the western part of the lake in 1999, and has the potential to severely impact shallow water habitats in the lake. Purple loosestrife has out-competed native cattails and other native plants, and dominates many marsh areas along the lake. Loosestrife is not used extensively by any native birds or mammals as a food supply, and may result in their abandoning areas dominated by this plant. Water chestnut and loosestrife may require extensive remediation efforts in Oneida Lake.

Invasive plant species are making inroads into the interior of the county and they are currently unchecked. Phragmites is following the highways northward from the lakeshore and invading the roadside wetlands. The plant is established along the road edge in many places and beginning to spread through the adjacent wetlands.

Japanese Knotweed has established robust stands along State Route 69 and is present in many populated areas. This plant can become dominant and almost impenetrable along stream banks, compromising important riparian habitat and preventing recreational access.

The double crested cormorant, a large fish eating bird, has been implicated in the reduction of walleye, yellow perch and other fish populations in Oneida Lake, as well as disturbing nesting common terns, a threatened species in New York State. The NYS DEC has been authorized by the US Fish and Wildlife Service to destroy cormorant nests to provide nesting sites for common terns. This has been a somewhat controversial decision, as many environmental interest groups oppose the eradication of the cormorants from the lake, while the decision was generally supported by fisherman and other sportsman's organizations.

Zebra mussels are present extensively throughout the lake basin. Zebra mussels filter plankton from the water, which removes a major food source of young fish, and the subsequent improved water clarity may expose them to predators. Zebra mussels also have reportedly caused the extinction of most of the lake's native clams.

Researchers have also speculated that within the next few years, the round goby (already present in Great Lakes) will invade the lake in large numbers. Gobies eat zebra mussels, which collect botulism bacteria. Other fish and birds that eat the gobies can become infected and die.

Studies in Oneida Lake by Cornell University and other researchers are regularly identifying new invasive species. The ecological and economic impacts of these species will be an object of concern for many years to come.

The Oneida Lake Watershed Management Plan, a multi-agency project, was recently established to address water resource protection for the Oneida Lake watershed. Project Information is available at [www.cnyrpdb.org/oneidalake](http://www.cnyrpdb.org/oneidalake). The project addresses several levels including funding for watershed improvement projects and public education programs and activities. A *State of Oneida Lake and Watershed Final Report* is available online or through the Central NY Regional Planning and Development Board.

## 9. Lake Ontario

### A. Water Withdrawal

In December 2005 The Great Lakes Governors and Premiers signed agreements at the Council of Great Lakes Governors' (CGLG) Leadership Summit that provide protection for the Great Lakes–St. Lawrence River Basin.

The agreements include the following points:

- There will be a ban on new diversions of water from the Basin. Limited exceptions could be allowed, such as for public water supply purposes in communities near the Basin, but exceptions would be strictly regulated.
- The States and Provinces will use a consistent standard to review proposed uses of Great Lakes water.
- The collection of technical data is to be strengthened, and the States and Provinces will share the information, which will improve decision-making by the governments.
- Regional goals and objectives for water conservation and efficiency will be developed, and they will be reviewed every five years. Each State and Province will develop and implement a water conservation and efficiency program.
- Lasting economic development will be balanced with sustainable water use to ensure Great Lakes waters are managed responsibly.

- The waters of the Basin are recognized as a shared public treasure and there is a strong commitment to continued public involvement in the implementation of the agreements.

## B. Lake Level Regime Change

A draft of the International Joint Commission's (IJC) Lake Ontario-St. Lawrence River Study was released for comment in 2005. This study assessed and evaluated three different plans (A, B, C, also known as the Economic Plan, the Environmental Plan, and the Blended Plan) to regulate outflows from Lake Ontario through the St. Lawrence River. The plans are available at [www.losl.org](http://www.losl.org) for review. There are many concerns regarding the plans, including lack of proposal for a long range plan and the failure to provide an adaptive management strategy, (which would allow reaction and decisions to be made as changes in the water level occur) rather than hard plan which may not be able to react as quickly as needed. Both the Oswego County EMC and the Oswego County Legislature submitted letters in August 2006 supporting Plan B.

In September 2007, the IJC announced that a proposed change in the Orders of Approval for lake level regulation was posted on their website (<http://www.ijc.org>), and that they were seeking public input. However, in October 2007 the IJC announced that there was disagreement between the involved parties (i.e., the federal governments of US and Canada) regarding the proposed Orders of Approval. They have therefore not released the report, and public meetings have been cancelled pending further notice. The new proposed plan was announced on March 28, 2007. As mentioned above, details and a meeting schedule may be found at <http://www.ijc.org>.

## C. Lake Restoration Collaboration

Following a public comment period, the final *Great Lakes Regional Collaboration's Strategy to Restore and Protect the Great Lakes* was released in December 2005. The Governors of the eight Great Lakes States expressed strong support for the Great Lakes Collaboration Implementation Act introduced in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives. These bills would implement the recommendations of the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration, a strategic planning effort in which the Governors played a leadership role. New York Governor George Pataki said: "This legislation is critical to preserving and sustaining these valuable resources and we look forward to continuing to work with our partners as we move forward to implement the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy." In February 2008, the Great Lakes Commission released the following statement regarding the region:

"A united Great Lakes region calls on Congress to strengthen national investment in Great Lakes restoration and protection as outlined in the *Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy to Restore and Protect the Great Lakes*. Increased support from the Federal government is needed to implement recommendations in the Strategy and to match the significant investment of state and local governments, Tribes and private funds in Great Lakes restoration. The following highest priority

actions – a subset of the Strategy recommendations – are consistent with the requests of the Governors of the Great Lakes States. We urge Congress to act on these regional priorities to address significant threats and capitalize on high-value restoration opportunities.

- **Stop Aquatic Invasive Species:** Enact comprehensive legislation such as the *National Aquatic Invasive Species Act* (S. 725) to address aquatic invasive species. If passage of a comprehensive bill is not possible in 2008, we urge Congress to strengthen and pass legislation to ensure that commercial vessels entering the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence system meet uniform ballast water discharge requirements and legislation to screen species that might invade the region from non-ballast pathways. Fully fund the Great Lakes Fishery Commission to control sea lamprey and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to complete construction and operation of the dispersal barrier system on the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal.

- **Clean Up Toxic Sediments:** Reauthorize the Great Lakes Legacy Act at \$150 million annually and fully fund the Act in FY2009 to continue to clean up contaminated sediments and restore Great Lakes “toxic hot spots.”

- **Restore Great Lakes Wetlands:** Continue existing support and appropriate an additional \$28.5 million for Federal programs to partner with the States, Tribes, local governments and other non-federal partners in restoring 200,000 acres of Great Lakes wetlands. Appropriate \$16 million for the Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act.

- **Protect Water Quality:** Restore funding and prevent further cuts to the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (reduced by more than one-third in FY2008) by appropriating \$1.35 billion for FY2009. Great Lakes States will lose approximately \$143 million in funding this year as a result of the FY2008 cuts.”

For more information, go to <http://www.glc.org/restore/>.

#### D. Sport Fishing

Research continues on the impact of zebra mussels and quagga mussels on the Lake Ontario food chain and the lake’s salmon and trout fishery. Some reports indicate that the filter feeding mussels have removed large amounts of zooplankton and phytoplankton (microscopic and nearly microscopic animals and plants) from the water column. This has the dual effect of increasing water clarity, and decreasing the amount of food available for the bait fish which rely on this plankton for food. This in

turn reduces the available population of bait fish preyed upon by major game fish such as salmon and trout. The number of game fish and their average size may experience a decrease as a result, which would have an impact on the local sport fishing industry. New exotic species seem to appear regularly and the impact of these

exotics on the natural ecology of the lake is still unknown. Federal regulations governing ballast water discharges / impacts from ocean going ships that transverse the St. Lawrence River and Lake Ontario have effectively addressed a way to stop the continuing spread of exotic species.

#### E. Recreational Diving

The vastly improved water clarity resulting from zebra mussels has contributed to an increase in recreational diving in Lake Ontario. The southern shore of Lake Ontario has many documented shipwreck sites, which have proven to be popular locations for recreational divers to explore.

#### F. Wind Power Development

Proposals to develop wind powered turbines along the southeast shore of Lake Ontario have generally included turbines sited off-shore. The southeast shoreline of Lake Ontario is widely regarded as an important avian migratory pathway. In the spring, large concentrations of raptors (birds of prey such as hawks, falcons and eagles) have been well documented along the lake's on shore and near shore regions. The impact of wind turbines on these species needs to be further assessed in regard to this particular section of Lake Ontario. The focus of the 2005 New York State Association of Environmental Management Councils annual meeting was on wind powered turbines, indicating the widespread interest and concern over the impacts of developing this resource. In 2006, construction of a large wind farm on the Tug Hill Plateau was completed. Another wind farm is proposed for Jefferson County. As of late 2007, no projects were being proposed for development in Oswego County. However, transmission lines carrying power from neighboring counties may need to be constructed locally to link nearby wind farms to the statewide electrical grid.

## **OSWEGO COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT COUNCIL 2007 ANNUAL REPORT**

### **INTRODUCTION**

By State law and County Resolution, the EMC's primary mission is to serve as a review and advisory board to local and state government on matters affecting the protection, conservation, preservation and proper management of the natural resources of Oswego County. In 1996, the Council agreed to serve as lead agency for the purpose of implementing eight major strategies of the Oswego County Comprehensive Plan. These strategies are:

- II.4.b. Identify potential wildlife movement corridors between major open space areas and encourage their incorporation into greenway, trail and local comprehensive planning efforts.

- II.4.d. Work with the NYS Natural Heritage Program to inventory habitats of threatened, rare and endangered species throughout Oswego County and identify areas with unique or important ecosystems that warrant protection.
- II.4.e. Encourage landowner agreements or donation of conservation easements by waterfront industries for the purposes of habitat protection, especially along Lake Ontario and major waterways.
- V.2.a. Develop a comprehensive inventory of all data on municipal wellfields, zones of contribution, recharge areas, aquifers and potential aquifers in the County and seek funding to more accurately determine these areas.
- VIII.3.b. Identify resources that have scientific or educational importance and natural heritage value and encourage education, interpretation and research opportunities relating to these resources.
- IX.3.c. Encourage development of and develop nature interpretive facilities focused on the major natural resource areas of the County.
- IX.5.b. Advocate proactive solutions and flexible regulatory approaches to environmental issues so that regulations do not become a hindrance to appropriate development.
- X.4.b. Develop environmental education and research programs to enhance knowledge and awareness of the local environment.

## **GRANTS RECEIVED AND ADMINISTERED**

During 2002 the EMC generated \$119,874 in State and Federal grant funding. Within these grants \$12,453 was returned to the county to cover their administration by the EMC staff. Due to the EMC's loss of funding and Program Coordinator, administration of any previously received grants was turned over to the Oswego County Department of Planning and Community Development (OCP&CD) in 2003. Funding for the 2007 county wide Big Tree Search coordinated by the EMC and the Oswego County Soil and Water Conservation District was provided by Constellation Energy's Nine Mile Point Nuclear Station.

## **MAJOR EMC ACTIVITIES**

### **1. EMC Strategic Plan and Membership**

EMC members developed and approved the 2007 EMC Strategic Plan and assigned members to lead and be responsible for various portions of the plan. Major activities in the 2007 Strategic Plan included continued monitoring of the progress of the Salmon River Corridor Bio-Inventory Project and the Salmon River Watershed Conservation Plan project, participating in many local environmental organizations, monitoring the progress of the NYS Open Space Plan as it pertains to present land acquisition, review and update of the status of invasive species throughout the County, regular review of the Environmental Notice Bulletin for projects with potential impact on Oswego County natural resources, researching and developing informational materials as requested by local governing bodies, and continuing the EMC guest speaker program for education about current environmental issues.

Reports by members were provided at monthly meetings as progress was made on the many aspects of the plan.

The EMC actively recruited new members during the year to fill vacancies, meet permissible membership levels, broaden the Council's knowledge and experience base, and establish a broader geographic distribution of its membership.

In accordance with its strategic plan, the EMC has established a website with a list of members, links to the Annual Report and other projects. For more information, go to <http://www.oswegocounty.com/planning/emc>.

## **2. Lake Ontario/St. Lawrence River (Strategies IX.5.b and X.4.b)**

In 2005, the Lake Ontario - St. Lawrence River Study Board entered the final year of a comprehensive five-year study for the International Joint Commission (IJC) to assess and evaluate the current criteria used for regulating water levels on Lake Ontario and in the St. Lawrence River. The current criteria in effect were established in 1958. The three proposed plans are the Economic Plan, the Environmental Plan, and the Blended Plan. EMC previously reviewed the three new plans and submitted a letter to the IJC indicating its support for the Environmental Plan, which has favorable provisions regarding hydroelectric power and lake and shoreline biota.

In 2006, after receiving public comments, additional revisions to the plan were made. In response to the revisions, the EMC reviewed, revised and resubmitted its earlier comments. The EMC also provided input to the Oswego County Legislature for the submission of the Legislature's comments.

In September 2007, the IJC announced that a proposed change in the Orders of Approval for lake level regulation was posted on their website (<http://www.ijc.org>), and that they were seeking public input. However, in October 2007 the IJC announced that there was disagreement between the involved parties (i.e., the federal governments of US and Canada) regarding the proposed Orders of Approval. They have therefore not released the report, and public meetings have been cancelled pending further notice. The new proposed plan was announced on March 28, 2007.

## **3. Ontario Coastal Wetlands Bioinventory/Salmon River Watershed Conservation Plan/Salmon River Corridor (Strategy II.4.d, II.4.e, VIII.3.b., IX.5.b.)**

As part of this project, the EMC originally contracted with the Natural Heritage Program (NHP) in 2001 to conduct a biodiversity inventory of selected coastal wetlands in Oswego County. In early 2004, the current contract to perform a biological inventory on several wetland communities in the Salmon River corridor was amended and extended to September 30, 2005. The New York State Natural Heritage Program (NYSNHP) was contracted to carry out the work. Requests to landowners for permission to access these wetlands were sent out, with 77 landowners responding. The results of this inventory will provide the EMC and other interested parties (NYSDEC, NYSNHP, developers and planning boards) with accurate, up-to-date

information on uncommon plants, animals and rare or exemplary ecological communities that occur in the Lake Ontario coastal wetlands. The information will be a valuable supplement to existing information used for land use management planning.

New York State is continuing to acquire properties, and is looking to be more proactive in terms of protecting some properties prior to actual acquisition. The first draft of the Habitat Assessment was issued for review in 2006, and the selection of target species and habitats began in the fall. In 2007, EMC received update reports at its monthly meetings on the assessment and other projects in the Corridor.

Dr. Peter Rosenbaum of SUNY Oswego and SUNY Oswego student research assistant Kyle Pursel gave a presentation to EMC members in April 2007 updating research information regarding status of the globally endangered bog buckmoth (*Hemileuca sp 1.*) and the wood turtle (*Glyptemys insculpta*) in Oswego County. Selkirk Fen along Lake Ontario is also a breeding site of the bog buckmoth.

#### **4. Oswego County Aquatic Vegetation Control Program (Strategy X.5.b.)**

In 2007, the EMC continued distribution of its series of pamphlets on nuisance aquatic vegetation found in Oswego County. The information was made available at the annual open house at the Salmon River Hatchery in Altmar, and revisions and reprints of the pamphlets were made when needed.

John DeHollander of the Oswego County Soil and Water Conservation District continued to update EMC on the results of its water chestnut control program. He presented the EMC with the final report on the 2006 Aquatic Vegetation Control Program. In response to questions from the EMC, he also noted that the biocontrol research program is essentially on hold at this time due to a current lack of funding.

#### **5. Local Involvement (Strategy IX.5.b. and X.4.b.)**

EMC members have served as members and liaisons on several local environmental groups and initiatives, including the Dune Coalition, Lake Neatahwanta Reclamation Committee, Save Oswego County Land Trust, Salmon River Watershed Conservation Plan, Water Quality Coordinating Committee, St. Lawrence Eastern Lake Ontario Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (SLELO PRISM), Friends of Great Bear and Friends of the Oswego River Canal. Periodic reports to the EMC regarding the activities of these groups add to the breadth and depth of EMC knowledge regarding environmental issues in the County.

EMC Chair Dave Hertzler and member Dick Drosse attended the October New York State Association of Environmental Management Councils conference. The focus of this year's conference was energy conservation. A written report of the conference was distributed to EMC members.

EMC also sponsored a proclamation in the County Legislature in 2007 for Earth Week, encouraging local residents to participate in Earth Week Clean-ups and Celebrations and to proudly accept responsibility for their part in securing a safe health environment for the generations to come. The proclamation was publicized by Oswego County Promotion and Tourism. At least 30 groups committed to participate. Emphasis was placed to make Earth Week clean-ups a year-round effort. Photos of local Earth Week were made available by EMC at <http://web.mac.com/oswegocountygreen/iWeb/Site/Welcome.html>

EMC members participated in a county wide 'Big Tree Project'. Supported by funding from Constellation Energy Group and Entergy, the project was an effort to find the largest trees of various species in the county. The candidate trees were assessed by circumference, height, and canopy width. Over 100 entries were received. Winners were announced and photos of the winning entries were on display in September at the Salmon River Fish Hatchery Open House in Altmar.

#### **6. Household Hazardous Waste Collection Funding (Strategy IX.5.b.)**

The EMC continued to work with the Legislature regarding costs and funding of a Household Hazardous Waste Collection day, with the goal of establishing a county budget line item for the event. As a result of these efforts, household hazardous waste collection days were held in 2007. The events resulted in the collection of 150,000 pounds of hazardous waste and 120,000 pounds of electronic goods from approximately 650 vehicles. The total cost was \$130,000, of which 50% (\$65,000) will be reimbursed by New York State. In addition, the County is planning to build structures to allow year-round drop off of HHW in the future.

#### **7. Solid Waste Management (Strategy IX.5.b.)**

EMC Chair Dave Hertzler acted as EMC observer to the County Solid Waste Management Board, and provided regular updates to members on solid waste issues in the County. In September 2007, Senator Jim Wright secured \$175,000 for a permanent household hazardous waste facility for the county, to be matched by \$125,000 in county funding. In addition, the County developed a procedure to transport fish waste from the Salmon River fish cleaning stations to the County Landfill.

#### **8. Alternate Fuels (Strategies IX.5.b and II.4.e)**

In 2006, the EMC submitted its final biodiesel report and fact sheet to County Legislature Chairman Russ Johnson. During 2007, construction neared completion on the Northeast Biofuels plant at the former Miller Brewery site in the Town of Volney. EMC members continued to research and discuss alternate fuels. Noting that corn-to-ethanol plants tend to drive up the price of feed, diesel fuel and fertilizer

for local dairy farmers, EMC discussed that Oswego County should begin to advocate development of fiber based fuels such as wood chips, pellets and willow biomass.

It was also announced in 2007 that Novelis in Scriba and TransGas Development Systems were proposing to develop a coal gasification plant at Novelis. The process converts coal to methane gas, which can then be used as a natural gas equivalent. The EMC arranged for Aaron Daley, Scriba Project Manager and Dr. Kestas Bendinskas, Associate Professor of Chemistry at SUNY Oswego, to provide presentations to the members outlining and discussing the various environmental costs and benefits of the project.

## **9. Tug Hill Bottled Water Plant (Strategies V.2.a and IX.5.b)**

In early 2007, Nestlé's announced they were investigating the possibility of developing a bottled water facility in the Tug Hill. The EMC formed a committee to investigate the potential impacts of such development and to prepare a report for the County Legislature. The report contains a discussion of regional hydrology, the basic process of developing a water bottling facility, and possible impacts of such development, particularly on the Tug Hill Aquifer and the cold water fishery of the region. The report was completed in October, submitted to the Chair of the Legislature and distributed to the County Legislators. The report included four major recommendations with the two most critical involving the urgent need for an Oswego County Water Resource Management Plan and the establishment of a County Commission or Committee, similar to the dormant Oswego County Water Quality Coordinating Committee, to oversee and direct the water resource management plan as one of its responsibilities.

## **CONCLUSION**

Oswego County continues to possess high quality water supplies and an impressive diversity of species and habitats. The major environmental threat is from development near the most sensitive of these valuable resources. This threat has increased with the recent economic downturn in the County, which has generated pressure to increase local tax revenues whenever and wherever possible. The primary role of local decision-makers should be to evaluate development and projects in light of potential environmental impacts, and to attempt to promote development compatible with the area's resources. In light of its lead agency status for several Oswego County Comprehensive Plan strategies, the EMC's ability to collaborate, coordinate, facilitate and educate remains an important resource for local planners and developers.

## **PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE FROM THE EMC**

“Biodiesel and Biofuel Information Report”, Oswego County Environmental Management Council Report: 2005.

“Eurasian Watermilfoil Alert”, Oswego County Environmental Management Council: 2002.

“Household Hazardous Waste Clean-up Day Funding Report”, Oswego County Environmental Management Council Report: 2005.

“Oswego County Water Resource Management and Nestlé’s Water Bottling Plant Impact Report”  
Oswego County Environmental Management Report: October 2007.

“Purple Loosestrife Alert”, Oswego County Environmental Management Council: 2002.

“Transgas Development Systems Coal Gasification Proposal Report to County Legislature”  
Oswego County Environmental Management Report: February 2008.

“Water Chestnut Alert”, Oswego County Environmental Management Council: 2002.

“Welcome to the Oswego River and Canal, Boating Wakes and Shoreline Erosion.”  
Oswego County Environmental Management Council: 2001.

“Wind Power Resource Materials: Oswego County Wind Power Project.”  
Oswego County Environmental Management Council Resource  
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## **Current EMC Membership**

Dr. David R. Hertzler, Chair	Town of New Haven
Tim Carroll, 1 <sup>st</sup> Vice Chair	Town of Granby
Dick Drosse, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Vice Chair	Town of Minetto
Sandra Bonanno, Secretary-Treasurer	Town of Volney
Legislator Barbara Brown	Towns of Palermo/Hastings/Schroeppel
James Best	Town of Granby
Mike Kerker	Town of Volney
Alix Krueger	Town of Amboy
Dr. Peter Rosenbaum	Town of Minetto
Don Ross	City of Fulton
Hal Smith	City of Oswego
John Puppardo	City of Fulton
Carlton Salvagin	Town of Hannibal
Fran Verdoliva	Town of Mexico
Karen Noyes, Ex-Officio	Oswego County Department of Community Development, Tourism and Planning
John DeHollander, Ex-Officio	Oswego County Soil and Water Conservation District

