

The Oneida Lake Bulletin

Fall 2018

www.oneidalakeassociation.org

Sedimentation in Oneida Lake

By Matt Kazmierski

In the spring 2018 *OLA Bulletin* we provided an overview of the sedimentation issues occurring in Oneida Lake, including an announcement that a 9 Element Clean Water Plan is being developed. This plan will help identify sources of pollution in the watershed and include measures to correct them. Although development of a 9 Element Plan will take a significant amount of time and effort to complete, it will help guide pollution prevention in the Oneida Watershed for many years to come. This process engages the community and helps raise public awareness of current and future problems with pollution and sedimentation. Funding, which has been awarded by NYS Department of State, is under development. (At the time of this publication, a contract had not been executed.)

What Might be Contributing to Increased Sedimentation in Oneida Lake?

Urban Storm Water Runoff

In natural areas, only a small percentage of storm water flows directly into streams. During most precipitation events, most of the water either evaporates or percolates into the ground. This typical scenario drastically changes in urbanized areas that are largely impervious. Every road ditch, rooftop, parking lot, and driveway reduces the ability for water to infiltrate the ground, leading to flashy streams (a stream with rapid increase in water flow), eroded stream banks, increased flooding, thermal stress, and additional pollutants entering our waterways. The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation does have a program in place to manage storm water runoff from newly developed and redeveloped sites, which can help hold the line. However, the fact is, development and its impacts on water quality went largely un-checked for literally hundreds of years. As a result, we are now stuck with dealing with reduced water quality and increased flooding in many locations as a result.

Howard Goebel, a licensed hydrologist and Professional Engineer, gave a presentation at OLA's recent Networking Meeting. Goebel, who is responsible for controlling water levels in the NYS Canal System, is acutely aware of the impacts of development in Oneida Lake's watershed. Goebel shared images that showed changes in a small section of

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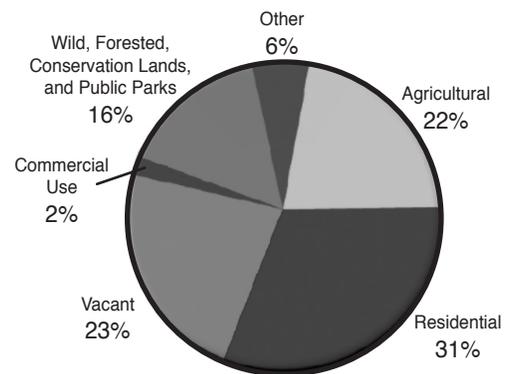


Volmer Creek Watershed, Cicero 1938.



Volmer Creek Watershed, Cicero, present day.

(images, Howard Goebel)



A nine-element plan will characterize the watershed and quantify pollutant loads. These data will provide the basis to develop effective management strategies.

President's Message

To the OLA Membership,

The OLA Board is continuing discussions on sedimentation in the lake and erosion controls along the tributaries. We have formed a Sedimentation Committee to research that issue and to make recommendations on how to advance public awareness. As you can see in this *Bulletin*, we have been meeting with the experts regarding the causes of this sedimentation and how it is changing the environmental conditions of Oneida Lake. We hope that the various town Codes, Planning, and Zoning Boards staffs are closely looking at the activities along the streams, ditches, and other tributaries into Oneida, Canaseraga, Chittenango, Limestone, and Butternut Creeks, where erosion is taking place, and on adjacent lands where soil is being moved, with or without permits. Loss of soil, and subsequent deposition into Oneida Lake is something that can be minimized with adequate oversight. **One recommendation for increasing public awareness that we are seriously considering is that of holding another public workshop in 2019, similar to the OLA Goose Workshop of 2017.**

Captain James R. Boylan and Investigator Robert Johnson of the NYS Environmental Conservation Police, DEC Region 7, brought a State drone for display at the Arrowhead Board Meeting. They gave us a presentation on the use of drones and how they can be helpful in documenting issues. We believe that this technology may be an excellent way to give the public a bird's eye view of the sedimentation coming into the lake after a major "Rain Bomb" storm.

Speaking of technology, the OLA is attempting to use the digital technology of today to be more responsive to our membership. If you have not been to the www.OneidaLakeAssociation.org Website recently, I encourage you to check it out. We are putting links to research and other information about Oneida Lake. The presentations that are made at our Annual Meeting and Board Meetings are posted on the site for your benefit. You will see the different webcams looking at Oneida Lake, the most recent of which is the Town of Sullivan's Chapman Park Weather Station. The OLA Boating Safety Map posted on the site may be downloaded, showing navigational hazards in and around the lake. We have included the new Oneida Lake Association Brochure, which also is available to print and use as a membership application or renewal. The Website provides a method of getting immediate responses for those members who write into the site. If you see anything that we should be including or expanding on the Website, please let us know. We want this site to be your go-to place for OLA up-to-date information.

If you have not been receiving the monthly E-Newsletters, it is usually because we do not have a working email address for your membership account. There have been 29 E-Newsletters produced over the past few years, and you have missed a lot of great information about what's going on with our lake. Send us a message with your current email address and we will correct your membership account and send you the latest E-Newsletter.

I want to again thank you for your continued OLA membership and your support that helps us "protect and preserve the natural resources of Oneida Lake and its surrounding ecosystem!"

Sincerely,

Warren Darby

www.OneidaLakeAssociation.org
president@oneidalakeassociation.org

The Oneida Lake Association, Inc.

Founded in 1945

The Bulletin is published by the Oneida Lake Association, Inc., so that its members may be informed regarding the activities of the association. The Oneida Lake Association, Inc., was organized in 1945 to restore and preserve the natural resources of Oneida Lake and its environs.

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To submit questions or comments about *The Bulletin*, contact editor John Harmon at jpharmon1@gmail.com

Sediment

(Continued from page 1)

the Volmer Creek watershed located in the Town of Cicero that have occurred since the early 1930s. The increase in development and additions to impervious areas is astonishing. There is no doubt these changes have significantly impacted water quality in the nearby receiving streams and in Oneida Lake itself.

Stream Bank Erosion

Bill Kapel, Hydrogeologist Emeritus with the United State Geological Survey, also gave a presentation at OLA's Networking Meeting. He included an excellent example of stream restoration work completed on a section of Limestone Creek (photos below). A section of Limestone Creek was severely impacted by a landslide that resulted in excessive erosion and sediment loss, some of which ultimately ended up in the bottom of Oneida Lake. This project realigned the stream and installed engineered improvements to help reduce stream bank

erosion. Hopefully, the development of a clean water plan will help elevate issues similar to this one and increase funding opportunities.

Stream Modification

Straightening and deepening of streams often results in increase stream velocity and stream bank erosion, which, in turn, significantly reduces a stream's natural ability to stabilize itself. Natural meanders allow stream velocity to dissipate and prevent or minimize erosion and sediment transport. A prime example of a stream that has been significantly altered is the lower portion of the Canaseraga Creek. Ditch Bank Road, the name of the road that travels along this section of stream, is a dead giveaway to what has occurred over the years. This stream no longer resembles a stream but more of a canal that was quite obviously modified in an attempt to convey water quickly with little regard to downstream impacts.

Agriculture

Land clearing, drain tile installation, row crops, stream buffer removal, and other practices can significantly change how sediment is transported in a watershed. There are already a lot of professionals working in our watershed with the skill sets to make improvements to address these issues but often times it comes down to getting enough funds to incentivize this work.

In Conclusion

Although there are potential solutions to all of these problems, it will take commitment, public support, and a significant financial investment to make a difference. Making improvements in a watershed that is 1364 square miles will also take a long time to complete. Oneida Lake is the largest waterbody located in entirety in New York State. OLA asks you to join us in giving our lake the attention and support it deserves.



Limestone Creek - Landslide



Limestone Creek - after stream repairs

Natural meanders allow stream velocity to dissipate and prevent or minimize erosion and sediment transport.

Howard Goebel Conservationist of the Year

The Oneida Lake Association has honored Howard Goebel, Deputy Director of Canal Engineering, Construction, and Maintenance, as its 2018 Conservationist of the Year. Goebel is the New York State Canal Corporation and New York Power Authority administrator whose responsibilities include Oneida Lake's water level controls and infrastructure.

"The job of managing Oneida Lake's water levels looks virtually impossible, yet Howard and especially his staff do a great job with the tools that they have," said Warren Darby, President of OLA. "The lake levels are something that most people don't think about until they are too high or too low, but managing them is a full-time job, every day and a lot of nights. Well managed lake levels benefit everyone who lives on or uses Oneida Lake, as well as our neighbors in downstream communities."

Managing Oneida Lake is a tall order indeed. In spite of many challenges,

Oneida Lake tends to rise and fall in a seasonably predictable manner between 370 and 371 feet above sea level. This is a long-established water level goal that has proven to be the sweet spot for protecting property, easing navigation, and supporting the lake's rich abundance of fish and wildlife. Goebel's leadership among hydrologists and his track record with Oneida Lake water management led to him receiving OLA's highest honor.

Brian Stratton, New York State Canal Corporation Director, stated "Those committed to the protection and enjoyment of Oneida Lake can take comfort knowing that, in Howard, they have a passionate steward of the water who has their interests at heart."

Said Goebel, "In one form or another, I've been around the Canal System my whole life. The Oneida Lake ecosystem is complex, but the challenge of balancing the needs of marine life with those of boaters and anglers is invigorating. I'm deeply honored by this recognition."

"Quietly and with no regard for the limelight, Howard has spent more than 15 years marshaling Canal resources to protect the lake's immensely valuable natural resources as well as the property of its residents and users. He's

an avid user of the lake too, using what little free time he has to pursue Oneida Lake's game fish, which gives him special insight into the value and importance of our Lake," said Darby.



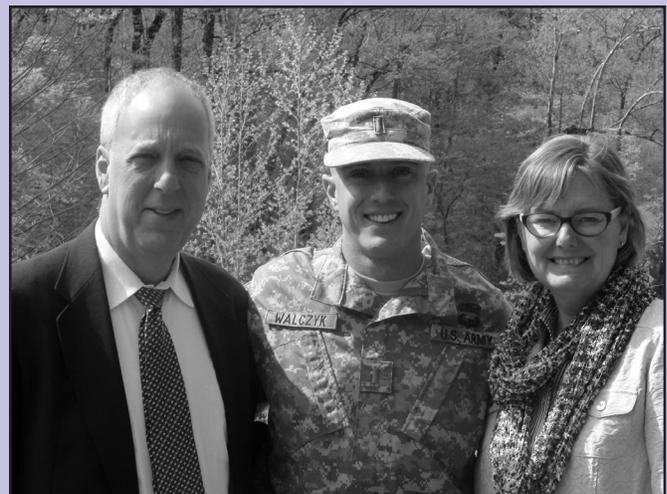
*Howard Goebel
OLA Conservationist of the Year*

Robert Walczyk Named Newest OLA Board Member

The Oneida Lake Association welcomes its newest member of the Board of Directors, Robert Walczyk, of Long Point Road, Brewerton. Bob is an attorney with a general practice in Brewerton. The Board looks forward to Bob's advice and counsel as many of the lake's issues have legal dimensions.

Like many of us, Bob shares our concerns for the future of the lake. As a lakeside resident, not only does he enjoy many water activities, he also values the experiences that others enjoy. For example, Bob states that our lake is "one of the greatest fisheries." Bob has expressed an interest in working with the Board on the current challenges facing the lake and its lakeside residents. Nuisance geese and sedimentation are two issues that Bob is ready to take on.

Recruited by OLA President Warren Darby, Bob fills the position recently vacated by long-time Board member Jim Novak. We also thank Jim for his service.



OLA Director Bob Walczyk with his family.

Networking Meeting

On August 13, the Oneida Lake Association blended picnic and policy by hosting its Annual Networking Meeting at Arrowhead Lodge at Oneida Shores County Park. Nearly 80 attendees participated, including members of area law enforcement, the NYSDEC, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, New York State Canal Corporation, and county and town legislators, such as Oswego County Legislator Roy Reehil, and Cicero Town Supervisor Mark Venesky. Representatives from Cornell University, ESF, the state fish hatchery, the Tug Hill Commission, and many other conservation-minded organizations also attended.

OLA President Warren Darby welcomed the attendees, introducing this year's focus issue—sedimentation entering the lake. The first half of the meeting included an outdoor barbecue, providing attendees an opportunity to network and brainstorm ideas on ways to share in a commitment to preserving and enhancing the lake's environmental and commercial health. They also witnessed a fly-in by Air 1, the helicopter from the Onondaga Sheriff's Department.

The meeting then transitioned to the Lodge where OLA President Warren Darby addressed the attendees, including invited speakers. Bill Kappel, a hydrologist with US Geological Service, spoke on the science behind the large amount of sediment discharging into Oneida Lake, carried by streams, as well as storm water runoff. He pointed to an increase in development within the Oneida watershed. While development is a natural consequence of an attractive environment, he noted three steps we can take to minimize

the amount of sediment entering the lake:

- Slow down the run-off, through retention ponds and other devices. Slow moving water carries less sediment.

- Limit land disturbance by developing in incremental stages.
- Identify fragile areas, and pay close attention to them.

Howard Goebel, of the NYS Canal Corporation, spoke on a similar theme. He encouraged developers, both large and small, to consider "Better Site Design," incorporating steps to minimize run-off. The goal should be No Adverse Impact, not only to the

immediate area of the development, but also to Oneida Lake, which may be miles away.



OLA Board President Warren Darby addresses the attendees.



Law Enforcement officials enjoying the picnic.

OLA Annual Meeting

The OLA held yet another successful annual meeting on May 2 at the Gillette Road School. For the more than two hundred members who attended, the OLA provided an educational and interesting meeting.

Cornell Senior Research Associate, Randy Jackson, reported that the state of the Oneida Lake fishery has not greatly changed. Anglers can expect to work on adult populations as follows: 1.1 million perch, 429 thousand adult walleye (driven by a good 2010 year class and determined by Cornell's 2016 mark-recapture estimate), and stable numbers of bass. The consequences of the introduction of round gobies are not yet known. There may be some die-off in winter, and reports of young goby in sportfish are varied. Regardless, any day outside fishing is better than one inside!

David Lemon, Fisheries manager for

the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, reported that cormorant management will continue. Locally there is still a science permit to determine fish distributions in the birds' diet, but the general permit to kill and harass birds is not predicated on fisheries. Protected terns are threatened at their island nesting sites, so all "take" is predicated on benefit of these birds by elimination of the cormorant.

Greg Boyer, from SUNY ESF, presented an excellent overview of the cyanobacteria (blue-green algae) status in Oneida Lake, comparing it with the notoriety given last year to the Finger Lakes. If you missed the meeting, or want to refresh your memory, look at his slides post on our website and learn more about "HABS," "microcystis" and "microcystins."

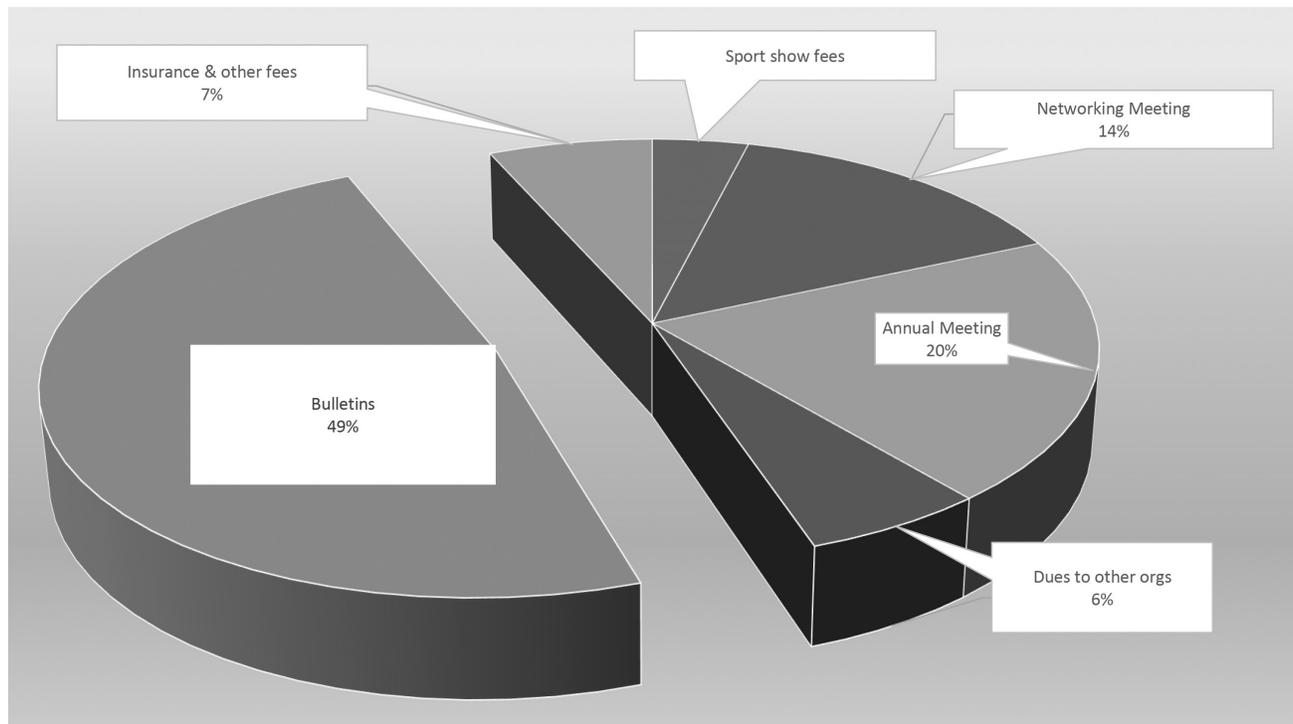
Bill Evans, director of the fish hatch-

ery in Contantia, provided highlights of this year's efforts to harvest and fertilize walleye eggs. More than 325 million eggs were harvested and fertilized. During that process over 16 thousand males and females were handled and returned safely to the lake. Bill also explained an incident that occurred on one particular morning during the harvest. Fifty mile an hour winds made it extremely hazardous for the hatchery workers to venture out into the water to collect walleye from the holding nets. The winds also caused a few of the nets to break loose from their anchors, which, in turn caused the nets to tumble about. As a result about a few hundred fish succumbed to the turbulent conditions, representing a small percentage of the fish handled.

We look forward to seeing you at next spring's meeting!

Finances

At our Annual Meeting in May, Treasurer Lance Vella and the OLA Directors shared a pie chart showing the expenditures approved by the Board. In the spirit of complete transparency, we are sharing this information in the Bulletin. Your Board remains committed to fiscal responsibility regarding our income and expenses.



Stop Foul-Hooking Walleyes

By Bill Girvan, OLA Board Member & Youth Fishing Educator

Over the past 30 years there have been a number of environmental changes that have affected Oneida Lake. Many of those changes have had major impacts on fish populations such as clearer water, warmer water temperatures, fewer days of ice covering the lake, and more invasive species, as well as flocks of cormorants that eat large numbers of fish.

Also fishing equipment is much better than it used to be, for both open and frozen water. There are very sophisticated fish finders, underwater cameras, bigger and safer boats, much better portable shelters, and warmer clothing for ice anglers to use. There are better fishing rods, reels, and lines, and sharper hooks, plus many new fishing lures for all types of presentations. And let's not forget all the updated fishing knowledge—most of it coming out of the midwest—that has really increased intelligent fishing pressure on Oneida Lake during all seasons.

We also have seen our adult walleye and yellow perch populations decrease while our smallmouth bass populations have increased during the past thirty years. We are very lucky we still have some of the best and most dedicated fisheries biologists at Cornell University and our NYS - DEC Fisheries Biologists are doing great jobs keeping a close eye on Oneida Lake along with our dedicated ECOs, plus our great Fish Hatchery in Constantia.

Last but not least, we have our OLA Board of Directors and membership that really care about the future of Oneida Lake so that future generations continue to enjoy our great lake. There are also many factors affecting the lake that we really can't control, such as global warming, seasonal weather conditions, rain bombs, and the numbers of cormorants on our lake, especially in late summer or early fall.

There are a couple of ethical fishing practices that anglers can start to follow consistently, both during open water fishing and ice fishing on Oneida Lake. Did you know that for the past 25 years or so that all foul-hooked walleyes must be returned in Oneida Lake and tributaries? Also, anglers are not supposed to cull walleyes while fishing Oneida Lake or its tributaries.

Both of those regulations are in your NYS Fishing Regulations Guide. If you switch out a smaller walleye for a larger one, you are looking at delayed morality especially during the summer when water temperatures are very warm. So would that extra fork-full of walleye fillets really be worth it? Not really! The foul hooking of walleyes happens mostly when using aggressive vertical jigging, aggressively

Ripping is what it looks like to anyone who observes it. This happens in open water with blade baits and most of the time not on purpose. If you slow down your lift/jigging motion to more of a finesse presentation you will decrease the number of fish you foul hook.

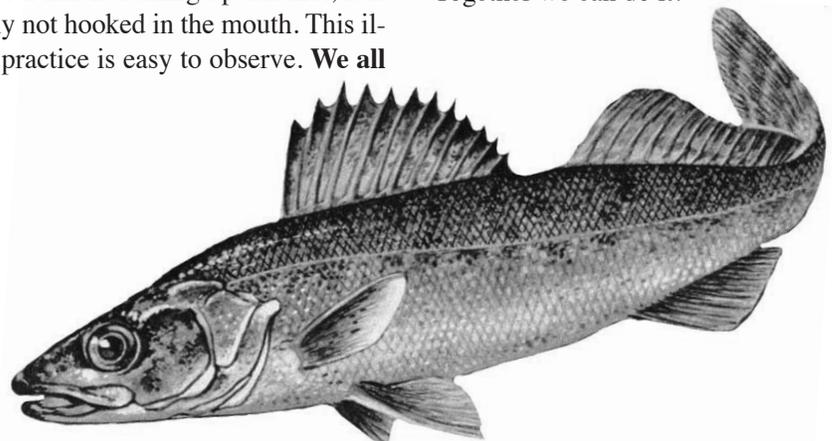
Some ice anglers, mostly on the eastern end of the lake, have been foul hooking numerous walleye for years with a weighted shiny spoon called the Sink by vertical jigging or ripping aggressively. When inactive fish are drawn in, they end up getting foul hooked. Also, when we see a fish is coming up tail first, it is clearly not hooked in the mouth. This illegal practice is easy to observe. **We all**

Did you know that for the past 25 years or so that all foul-hooked walleyes must be returned in Oneida Lake and tributaries?

know that walleyes are one of the best tasting fish, but it really is about time we all move into the fair chase direction whenever fishing on Oneida Lake.

During this same 30-year time span there has been a major cultural shift with close to no foul hooking allowed for steelhead or rainbow trout on the Salmon River and all of Lake Ontario.

The future is now and all anglers on Oneida Lake should refrain from culling walleyes and try to avoid aggressive presentations that foul hook walleye. If you do foul hook a fish, please release it. We need to respect our Oneida Lake walleyes with positive cultural changes. Together we can do it!



Fish image credit: NOAA/GLERL

Thank you to all of the Fire Departments that serve Oneida Lake!

Featuring: West Monroe Fire Department Water Rescue

The West Monroe Fire Department provides yet another layer of safety equipment for Oneida Lake. They have two boats which they can call into action when the need arises.

A 2002 Rivercraft Air Boat was purchased to provide a safe method of rescue on the ice/water of Oneida Lake. Weighing in at less than 1000 lbs, this boat can go many places that no other vehicle can even attempt to go, and at a rapid response. It has been used successfully on search and rescue missions in swamps, rivers, and on the thin ice of Oneida Lake. It has also been requested to assist in recovery missions with the State Police. It is a 16 ft flat bottom boat with a 140 hp Hurth aircraft two-stroke engine. It is capable of running between ice, water, and snow. During the warmer months, it can easily operate in less than 6 inches of water and climb over various obstacles. This boat has been directly responsible for several saves on the lake and surrounding districts.



West Monroe's Water Rescue

A 1985 Boston Whaler center console boat was originally purchased in a joint venture with the Cleveland, Constantia, and West Monroe fire departments to provide a means to protect our common southern response area, Oneida Lake. The makeup of the Battalion 3 water rescue has changed as Cleveland and Constantia have both purchased their own rescue boats. At 25 feet long, this open water rescue boat (33WR1) responds to several calls on lake spanning from disabled boats to people in the water requiring immediate rescue. Over the last ten years, working mutual aid with all Battalion 3, several rescues, including boaters returning home safely following a mechanical failure, occurred due to the specialized equipment of West Monroe and all mutual aid departments have.

Water Rescue Fire Departments That Serve Oneida Lake

We are fortunate to have seven Water Rescue Fire Departments that serve Oneida Lake.

They are:

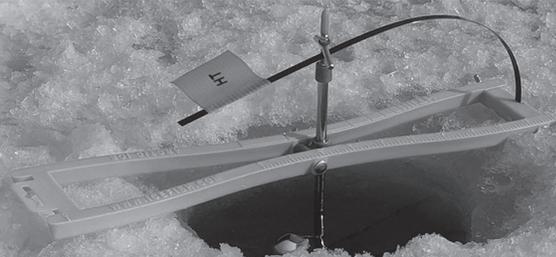
Brewerton Fire Department	South Bay Fire Department
Bridgeport Fire Department	Sylvan Beach Fire Department
Cleveland Fire Department	West Monroe Fire Department
Constantia Fire Department	

Attention Ice Anglers!

**Have a safe and
prosperous season.**

**Please leave nothing behind
except a hole in the ice!**

**Thank you.
The Oneida Lake Association**



The Oneida Lake Association Moves Into the 21st Century

As you many have noticed, on your membership application, you have the option to get the Bulletins electronically instead of being mailed. This saves the organization in printing, postage and mailing costs! To communicate more routinely we started an e-newsletter that is emailed out periodically. We have noticed however, that many of you don't "open" the file to read the newsletter sent from Constant Contact – Please be sure this email doesn't land in your Spam folder! We want to communicate with you, our members, easily and efficiently – email is a great way to do that!

~ Thank you!

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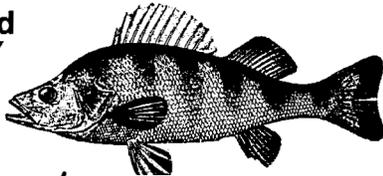
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Sturgeon in Oneida Lake and nearby waters may be tagged. Biologists at Cornell University and NYSDEC need your help to track these fish. Yellow tags may be attached at the base of the dorsal fin. If you catch a tagged sturgeon, please write down the number on the tag and length of fish, release the fish immediately, and call Cornell University at (315) 633-9243 or contact NYSDEC at (315) 785-2262 as soon as possible.






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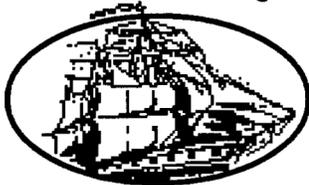
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