

The Oneida Lake Bulletin

Spring 2013

www.oneidalakeassociation.org

DEC Plans More Protection for Oneida Lake

Illegal fishing, walleye poaching, and vigilant DEC law enforcement have been paramount OLA concerns since our association's inception in 1945.

In January, your OLA board met with Kenneth Lynch (DEC Director-Region 7), Judy Drabicki (DEC Director-Region 6), and ECO Captains Matthew Revenaugh (Region 7) and Chris Handley (Region 6) to discuss current enforcement issues.

A major OLA focus has been the potential for more walleye poaching from ice-out until the season's opener on the first Saturday in May. The OLA believes that the DEC's decision to allow catch and release bass angling during this time increases poaching opportunities by non-bass anglers, which necessitates a corresponding intensification of law enforcement.

Responding to this issue, Director Lynch stated, "This year, we plan to establish more of a presence on and around Oneida Lake from ice-out to opening day of walleye season. We're going to focus on this plan in the coming season and then, based on the complaints we receive about violations, adjust it for next year." Captain Revenaugh added, "I believe that we can uphold the effort on the tributaries and on the main lake during this critical time. However, if an emergency arises in another region, we would have to sacrifice our Oneida Lake commitment."

Both Captains Revenaugh and Handley stated that complaints received by the DEC heavily determine the department's enforcement actions. Both urged that OLA members who witness illegal fishing call their county's ECOs (game wardens) or the DEC's "Turn in Poachers and Polluters" hotline, 1-800-TIPP-DEC. Revenaugh and Handley emphasized that, even if the ECOs were backed up with complaints and couldn't immediately respond, any information could be used

as a basis for future investigations.

The importance of registering complaints echoed clearly during the meeting. Revenaugh underscored this by stating, "During the last year's March/April closed walleye season, we only received six calls from Oneida Lake. One involved a violator who exceeded the limit of crappies and the other five dealt with fishing in closed areas. Concurrently, we handled 235 calls in Onondaga, Madison, and Oswego Counties that dealt with other matters; sixty-five of these involved unlawful open burning."

The captain's message could not be clearer; *OLA members need to report all violations that they witness.*

The board asked the panel, "Given the existing state law prohibiting catch and disturbance of walleyes during their spawning and closed seasons, what is the DEC's plan to enforce it? How does the DEC define 'disturbance?'" Captain Revenaugh responded, "The DEC does not enforce the law cited. Instead, we enforce the law that prohibits 'possession of fish in closed seasons' because judges understand this better. If a judge doesn't comprehend a law, and the word 'disturbance' can be confusing, it's difficult for him/her to impose suitable penalties."

Captain Handley added, "During the time from March 15 to opening day, closed streams like Fish, Chittenango, and Scriba Creeks provide walleyes greater protection. Our ECOs have always been committed to enforcing this closure and remain so today."

This discussion led to questions regarding the severity of judges' decisions. Both captains stated that, historically, judges' penalties ranged from appropriate

to disturbingly lenient. However, Revenaugh cited a potential remedy. Recently, in Region 6, the DEC's Division of Law Enforcement started publishing violations, accompanied by judges' names, municipalities, and the fines imposed. Newspapers printed this information and the captains expressed hope that it would pressure judges to assign violators stiffer

penalties. A similar program does not yet exist in Region 7.

The panel was asked what the DEC views as the most pressing shortfall that impedes law enforcement on Oneida

"This year, we plan to establish more of a presence on and around Oneida Lake from ice-out to opening day of walleye season."

**— Kenneth Lynch,
Director DEC Region 7**

Lake. All participants voiced that a lack of ECOs handicaps enforcement. Revenaugh stated that six vacancies existed in law enforcement for both Regions 6 and 7, and over fifty vacancies thinned ECO ranks state-wide. He expressed hope that a new class of ECOs from the DEC's Law Enforcement Training Academy could help fill the gap, but noted that upcoming retirements might intensify the force's depletion. The panel agreed that state budget cuts have made the situation more difficult.

The meeting ended on an upbeat note. Region 6 Director Judy Drabicki informed the board that, "On the positive side, DEC Commissioner Martens is a big advocate for the department's enforcement arm. With his support, we can turn the corner and increase enforcement throughout both regions."

The OLA strongly supports any DEC action that enhances enforcement on Oneida Lake. A resource as fertile and economically vital as our lake deserves top-notch protection - and angling regulations that enhance officers', not poachers', effectiveness.

President's Message

To the OLA Membership:

As your president, I am very proud of our accomplishments over the past sixty-eight years. Our board of directors embodies service, passion, and enthusiasm for Oneida Lake. YOU, our members, strengthen the board's work with your dedication, support, and commitment. The Oneida Lake Association remains vigilant in guarding our lake's rich environs. As part of this year's message, let me share a few OLA action points during the past year. These include:

After a string of serious accidents on Oneida Lake, the OLA established a boating safety committee to find ways to alert boaters to the lake's dangers. This committee has done a superb job designing a boating safety brochure specifically for Oneida Lake. Every person who uses the lake should have this publication. We hope to make it available by June 1.

The OLA strongly supports the winning blend of "family, children, and fishing." Our second annual "Take a Child Fishing" charter, guided by Captain Ray Brown, will be awarded at our April 29 annual meeting at Cicero-North Syracuse High School.

The OLA believes in the absolute necessity of effective cormorant management on Oneida Lake. Thanks to dedicated OLA directors and members, and the DEC's organizational support, last fall's volunteer cormorant hazing program was successful. The DEC promises an enhanced effort in 2013 (check out the article on page three in this *Bulletin*).

The OLA Board recognizes the need for strict law enforcement on Oneida Lake, especially during the walleye pre-spawn and spawning periods. The OLA Board met with DEC Regional and Law Enforcement leadership in January to discuss an increased presence on the lake (see *The Bulletin's* front page article for details).

The OLA Board wants to track critical events in Oneida Lake and its watershed by reaching out to decision makers on environmental issues that affect the lake. Acting on that philosophy, the board met with DEC Region 7 Director Kenneth Lynch and discussed a wide range of issues including the North Shore and Bridgeport sewer projects, a large tire dump within the lake's watershed, the Toad Harbor wetlands, water chestnuts, and fisheries regulations.

The OLA's directors' voices reach far beyond Oneida Lake. For example, I serve on the DEC's Water Management Advisory subcommittee for harmful algae blooms, the New York State Invasive Species Advisory Committee, and the National Invasive Species Advisory Council. Director Patricia Cerro-Reehil is Executive Director of the New York Water Environment Association. Director Kurt Snyder is a delegate to the DEC's Waterfowl Season Task Force, and Director and 2012 Conservationist of the Year Bill Girvan sits on the New York Conservation Council and co-chairs its Fishery Advisory Committee.

Let me welcome our newest OLA board member - Thérèse Dancks. Thérèse is an attorney who currently works in the judicial system. She is longtime lake area resident and a very passionate Oneida Lake advocate. She has received numerous awards for outstanding community service and will doubtlessly strengthen the association's endeavors.

Our most valuable and important asset is YOU, our members. When you renew your membership, ask friends and family members to join. Remember - strength lies with numbers and a robust membership facilitates the protection, preservation, and enhancement of Oneida Lake.

And come to our annual meeting on April 29 at Cicero-North Syracuse High School! I look forward to seeing you there. Have a magnificent summer on the lake!



Edward L. Mills
President, Oneida Lake Association

**OLA Members -
Report Violators -
Call 1-800-TIPP-DEC!**

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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A Necessary Clarification

Festering misunderstandings often engender long-term enmity, a profoundly tragic situation. The OLA believes in policy clarity; thus, this brief article.

The association strongly opposes the DEC's decision to allow catch and release bass fishing on Oneida Lake from ice-out until walleye season's opening day. The OLA believes that this scenario creates opportunities for poachers to prey upon the lake's invaluable walleye population.

It has come to the board's attention that certain anglers believe that the OLA's position statement somehow labels bass fishermen as "walleye poachers." Nothing could be further from the truth. The OLA Board has *never* expressed any sentiments that should be interpreted in that manner.

DEC Plans Additional Cormorant Hazing

Expect an enhanced cormorant harassment program for Oneida Lake in 2013. David Lemon, DEC Fisheries' Manager - Region 7, informed the OLA Board in February that some changes should be in the offing. Among these are the following.

The DEC recommends adding one additional hazing day each week during September to boost the program's effectiveness. Statistics show that migratory cormorant numbers have been increasing during this month, making additional harassment prudent.

Manager Lemon and his colleagues also recommend extending their hazing calendar into October, if bird counts spike during that month. Larger numbers of migrant birds have been observed in October in recent years. Previously, the DEC's harassment program avoided dates in this month, in deference to the lake's waterfowl hunters, but the presence of significant cormorant flocks creates an urgency that must be addressed.

If diet studies show that 90% or more of cormorant consumption is gizzard

shad, the DEC proposes eliminating hazing altogether during late September and October. Massive shad hatches buffered Oneida Lake's game fish populations during the past two autumns. Shad effectively provided cormorants sustenance so that the birds did not destroy walleyes and yellow perch.

Lake area residents may hear more "banging" during this year's hazing program because federal regulations over the type of pyrotechnics used during the past three years have eased. The DEC proposes that harassment volunteers be allowed to purchase, store, and use these "pyros," and their launchers, during this year's program. During that golden time when the United States Fish and Wildlife Services protected Oneida Lake, personnel from that agency found that the "fireworks effect" was extremely effective in making cormorants leave the lake.

In addition to hazing, DEC technicians will remove cormorant nests on Oneida Lake's islands. In the era prior to harassment, cormorants produced hundreds of young on the isles, com-

pounding their devastation of the lake's walleyes and perch. Up to 360 nesting pairs of cormorants used the lake's islands by 2000; this no longer occurs because of Wildlife Services' and DEC efforts.

Never forget the magnitude of cormorants' impact on Oneida Lake in the recent past. In 1995, Cornell Field Station biologists began tabulating the number of fish killed by cormorants annually. *In 1996 alone, the birds consumed around 4,113,000 Oneida Lake fish, including nearly 190,000 walleyes and slightly over 2,000,000 yellow perch.* About 82,000 of the walleyes were age one or older fish that, in cormorants' absence, would likely have reached adulthood, enriching the lake's fishery and, consequently, the lake area's economy.

The Oneida Lake Association and every concerned New York State angler welcome the DEC's and Fisheries Manager Lemon's efforts to prevent a recurrence of this very preventable ecological and fiscal tragedy.

In Memoriam: Arnold Armani (1925 - 2012)

The Oneida Lake Association and its board of directors join the greater Solvay community in mourning the passing of longtime Director Arnold Armani, who bequeathed a lifetime's treasury of family, friendship, and environmental achievement when he died at University Hospital last October. Arnold was a dedicated outdoorsman who cherished Oneida Lake's beauty and bounty, and he delighted in sharing that richness with everyone.

A son of Barney and Judith Togni Armani, of Solvay, Arnold served his country honorably and proudly in the United States Navy in World War II. During and after the conflict, he trained as an electrician and worked in that profession at General Electric, retiring in 1985 after a career that spanned thirty-five years. He and his wife of sixty-three years, the former Betty Scaia, raised three daughters - Beverly and Barbara Armani, and

Pat Tuori, and he was deeply proud of their accomplishments, as well as those of his grandsons, Ryan Tuori and Andrew Armani.

Elected to the OLA's board of directors in 1979, Arnold Armani made invaluable contributions to the organization and its programs. He served as secretary from 1982 through 1989, vice president from 1989 through 1994, and was a mainstay of the OLA's annual meeting coordination committee during the 1990s and 2000s. Arnold loved children and believed in sharing the lake's values with them. For over three decades, he anchored the Brewerton entry station for the association's annual "Take a Youngster Fishing Contest," praising and encouraging the scores of young anglers who proudly brought their catches to his measuring table.

Arnold Armani's life brought vivid meaning to Oneida Lake's role as a

workingman's Mecca, an invaluable retreat of environmental richness unique to New York. Arnold was an OLA director whose fellowship every member of the board cherished and whose equanimity and wisdom bestowed continuity on the association's agenda. Fishing with Arnold gave life to the bygone days when walleyes and waterfowl aplenty trumped upstate's urban industrialism, when anglers enjoyed the lake's bountiful offerings free from technology's constrictions, and when crop and dairy farms gave our lakeshore a blessedly bucolic frame. Being with Arnold Armani brought a peace of mind that transcends time - a peace enhanced by the joys of camaraderie and association, and the everlasting joy of sharing the goal of preserving our state's richest aquatic resource.

May there be more like him. Many, many more.

Oneida Lake, 2013

-by the Staff of the Cornell University Biological Field Station

When you look at an aerial photograph of central New York, Oneida Lake stands out as a prominent feature of the landscape. Similarly, the lake looms large in the local culture and economy. Scientists at the Cornell Biological Field Station have monitored the lake for over fifty-six years and appreciate the opportunity to share with readers of *The Bulletin* an update on the state of the lake.

The Walleye Population

Our mark-recapture walleye population estimates give us the most accurate measure. In 2010, our last mark-recapture year, we estimated the number of adult walleyes at just under 500,000. Catches from our gill nets in 2012 indicated that the population remained at that level. We will conduct another mark-recapture estimate in 2013.

Recent population estimates are well above levels observed from 1994 through 2003, when Oneida's walleyes experienced severe declines. While walleye numbers remain less than in the "good old days" of the 1960s-1980s, the walleye population is capable of generating angler catch rates as high as they were when these fish were more abundant.

The quality of Oneida Lake's walleye fishing has not suffered; it is still one of New York's premiere walleye lakes. Anglers in 2012 enjoyed excellent spring and early summer fishing, with catch rates as high as we've seen in years. We estimate that 60,000 walleyes were harvested during the open water season, most of them before a proliferation of gizzard shad created a plentiful food source last August.

The lake's walleye population should be able to sustain current harvest levels into the near future, but we are concerned by the generally poor survival of fish hatched during the 2000s. On average, walleye year classes over the last decade contributed around 50,000 fish annually, roughly the same number anglers harvest in a good year.

In 2011, we initiated an angler interview program at the lake's boat launches to monitor walleye catch rates. We will

continue that program this year and supplement it with a boat survey of anglers. If our clerks approach you, please take a few minutes to answer their questions because your input helps us better understand current trends in the walleye fishery.

Yellow Perch Stability

While Oneida Lake's yellow perch population hovers around 1,000,000 adults, our samples in 2012 yielded the highest catches of adult perch we've seen since 2008. As with walleyes, yellow perch numbers remain below levels observed from the 1950s to the 1980s.

We suspect that changes in the lake associated with establishment of zebra and quagga mussels (increased water clarity) reduced the survival of very young yellow perch and, for the immediate future, we expect their abundance to remain below long-term averages. Anglers can still enjoy good catch rates of yellow perch, and they should continue

to be a staple of the winter fishery. Poor ice conditions during recent winters kept many anglers off the lake, so harvests of yellow perch may have been reduced, allowing more fish to survive for open-water anglers.

Smallmouth Bass Proliferate

Our catches of smallmouth bass continue to indicate a population three times larger than it was in the 1980s! Our monitoring in 2012 revealed another successful year class of young bass, and our catches of adult bass in gill nets remain high. Angler catch rates of bass are among the best in the state, and the lake now hosts over sixty tournaments annually.

Superb White Perch Angling

White perch are very abundant in the lake. In three of the last four years our catches of white perch in standard netting exceeded catches of yellow perch, suggesting that white perch are one of the lake's most numerous fish. Many white perch exceeds twelve inches and fight tenaciously for anglers who use lighter tackle. A white perch fishing trip creates child-pleasing excitement and catches commonly exceed fifty. In addition, white perch are a fine "table fish." Target them; take advantage of their abundance. You won't regret your decision.



Research Associate Tony Van De Valk and Technician Cathy Gumtow display the ninety-three pound lake sturgeon netted by the Field Station staff last spring.

Lake Sturgeons Reach Record Size

Lake sturgeons stocked between 1995 and 2004 continue to thrive. In spring of 2012, we netted a ninety-three pound sturgeon, the largest we have seen thus far. In addition, our May-June sturgeon nettings yielded thirty fish, ten of which exceeded fifty pounds. Besides the ninety-three pound behemoth, we captured a ninety pounder, an eighty-five pound specimen, and eight others that surpassed fifty pounds! After taking measurements, we released all of the fish, unharmed, into the lake.

Netting a mature female with ripe eggs just downstream from Oneida Lake

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(Continued from page 4)

provided the most exciting sturgeon news last year. This fish was almost certainly stocked originally in Oneida; thus, it appears that our oldest females are capable of spawning.

If any anglers encounter sturgeon congregations in the tributaries this spring or catch small lake sturgeons (less than two feet), please call the Field Station at 315-633-9243. Remember that the sturgeon is listed as a “threatened” species in New York and must be immediately released. If you can take a quick photograph of the fish, without injuring it, we would love to have a copy! We tagged many sturgeons and encourage anglers to call if they catch a tagged fish. Be sure to record the location and the tag number of the fish.

Other Fish

As shoreline vegetation spreads with the clearer water conditions brought about by zebra and quagga mussels, so

have catches of fish typically associated with shallow, vegetated habitats. We continue to see more large-mouth bass, pumpkinseeds (sunfish), bluegills, long-nose gar, chain pickerel, and bowfins in our samples. These population spikes show that the near shore fish community is expanding in response to the increase in their preferred habitats. Anglers fishing shallower waters should enjoy a diverse catch.

In Conclusion

As the summer of 2013 approaches, we expect that Oneida Lake will continue to offer diverse and high quality fishing and recreational opportunities. The lake will remain a vital resource for our region even while it adjusts to the changes that have occurred over the



During a nest count, Cornell intern Collin Farrell disturbed a tern, creating a comical consequence.

past decades. Oneida is not the same lake it was in the 1970s and 1980s, but it is still one of the area’s most valuable natural and economic resources.

We rate the lake’s health as “very good,” but its ecosystem is in flux. The future may hold more changes. Round gobies live in both Onondaga and Cross Lakes, meaning that only one barrier separates them from Oneida. Some round gobies may be in the lake and, if you catch one, please keep it and call us so that we

can confirm their presence.

While the lake will always be a valued resource, “change” has clearly become the norm. All who treasure Oneida Lake must work together to protect it, and we will continue to monitor the lake’s health in order to help achieve that goal.

News from the Constantia Hatchery

-by Carl Rathje, Acting Manager

Our hatchery’s crew is busy preparing for the annual walleye netting and egg collection. 2012 was another productive year. Our staff stocked 208 million walleye fry, 389,000 summer fingerlings, and 63,000 fall fingerlings in New York waters. Over 170 million walleye fry were released into Oneida Lake. Anglers savored the fruits of this stocking as they enjoyed fantastic fishing throughout the spring and summer!

The hatchery also continued its endangered fish species program by producing 2,100 paddlefish for Conewango Creek in Allegheny County and 2,300 round whitefish for several Adirondack Lakes.

Last June, our hatchery’s staff assisted in the wild lake sturgeon egg collection on the St. Lawrence River near Massena. Over

300 adult sturgeons were netted and these fish yielded 65,000 eggs that were transferred back to our hatchery. Sadly, no sturgeons were produced from these eggs. This year, the hatchery plans to use some new incubation techniques.

The Oneida Hatchery has experienced a significant staffing change during this past year. Manager Mark Babenzien retired in August 2012. Mark played a crucial role in the production of billions of walleyes for New York’s stocking program. His expertise, acquired through over three decades at the hatchery, will be tough to replace. We wish him and his family “the best” in their future endeavors.

Currently, I serve as acting hatchery manager, assisted by William Evans. Both of us have

over twenty years experience in walleye culture. Our staffing includes two new fish technicians and four seasonal workers, rehired for spring’s egg collection.

A reminder - the hatchery plans to net walleyes during the first or second week of April. Last year, unusually warm temperatures advanced egg collection to March 20; the weather in Central New York can be unpredictable. Call the hatchery in advance for exact dates at 315-623-7311. The annual walleye run and egg collection lasts about one to two weeks and 15-30,000 adult walleyes will be netted.

We will be open seven days a week, 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., starting in April. Our lobby features a video showing the entire walleye rearing process, along with displays, and fish and wildlife mounts. Visitors get close to fish and fish culturing technology at our hatchery! A trip to our Constantia facility makes for an enjoyable family outing.



Hatchery workers haul a trap net filled with ripe walleyes.

The OLA Fishing Corner

“The Answer, My Friend, is Blowing in the Wind!”

-by Captain Tony Buffa

Walleyes, known for their nomadic behavior, can be challenging to locate and equally challenging to catch. Of all the freshwater species, walleyes rank at the top of the “passivity” trait. Other than an empty belly, little else inspires a walleye to attack your bait. Because these fish wander from location to location, they possess no sense of territoriality, no identity to call “home.”

The research community has documented that walleyes commute from Oneida to Onondaga Lakes and vice-versa. Tag and recapture studies confirm this. Thus, the same intrusive techniques that harass bass and provoke strikes have little to no impact on “eyes.” Walleyes consume their young rather than protect them. They prefer swimming away from an intruder instead of attacking. These are very passive fish.

Because walleyes are lethargic by nature, I believe that water movement plays a strong role in determining their behavior. Oneida’s currents flow very slowly from east to west when winds are absent. Consequently, if you find a school of “eyes” and weather conditions remain stable, with seas calm, chances are that the school will not wander afar.

The next conundrum occurs when flat conditions curtail the “walleye bite.” No better motivation exists than a change in the wind. How many times have you fished a windless Oneida, with walleyes showing on the fish finder, without a single bite, after casting every reasonable item in the tackle box? If it’s happened to me, I’m sure it’s happened to you. All of a sudden a slight zephyr builds, a ripple becomes a chop, rod tips bend, and nets fly!

Nature’s motivation cannot be surpassed. Sure, we all possess different levels of angling skills, but none rivals “mother nature.” Why do walleyes respond to wind? I call it the “aquarium syndrome.” Observe fish movement in an aquarium. Most hunker down to the bottom or suspend somewhat motionlessly - a picture of tranquility. Now, initiate a disturbance. Take a stick and stir the bottom. Watch the whole community enliven, swimming about, sampling particles in the water column. Mother nature’s “stick” is the wind. It can churn Oneida’s walleyes into a feeding frenzy. Winds can take an unresponsive school of walleyes and morph them into voracious predators.



Happiness is a lunker walleye! Joshua Qualls boated his 23-inch “eye” with Captain Tony at Buoy 119 last summer.

The same wind that created your fishing opportunity can very easily move that school of “eyes.” Baitfish, subject to current, attract walleyes but, as the bait migrates, so do the predators and you must follow.

Wind - is it your friend or foe? Oneida’s breezes oxygenate the water, push unsightly algae blooms and floating weeds ashore, cool an otherwise oppressively hot day, and make for an effective drift that covers more fishing ground. That same wind can turn a picturesque Oneida Lake into an ugly tempest. It can test your helmsman’s skills and shorten a fishing trip. However, the wind makes walleyes bite! Deal with our lake’s winds - and catch more “eyes.”

Don’t Cull Walleyes!

Noting the increasing popularity of walleye fishing tournaments, the OLA reminds anglers that, while it is legal to cull smallmouth and largemouth bass, culling walleyes is banned by the New York State Freshwater Fishing Regulations.

You can find the relevant laws on page thirteen of the state fishing guide. Listed under “Taking and Possession of Fish,” the rules state:

“A person may not possess, kill, or unnecessarily injure fish in excess of the daily limit for that species.

The fish an angler catches and immediately releases uninjured will not be counted as part of the daily limit for that species.

A person may continue to fish for a species while in possession of a daily limit for that species provided all fish of that species subsequently caught are *immediately returned* to the water. See (the next rule) for special provisions made for largemouth and smallmouth bass.

A single, uninjured largemouth or smallmouth bass that an angler is landing, measuring, or in the process of releas-

ing from a re-circulating or aerated livewell is not considered a part of the daily limit.”

Sound reasoning supports these rules. Walleyes kept in livewells and released have low chances for survival. Culling walleyes wastes a precious resource; New York’s regulations clearly prohibit the practice.

The OLA Board strongly encourages its members to report violations of these rules by calling 1-800-TIPP-DEC.

OLA to Publish an Oneida Lake Boating Advisory

Your Oneida Lake Association Board believes in directly addressing major issues that concern our lake and its people. One such problem, dramatically underscored by a tragic boating accident at Buoy 113 last summer, is safe lake navigation. Oneida Lake is “big water” and it can be treacherous. Weather conditions, shoals, boat traffic, and human nature combine to create daily dangers that confront all who use our lake.

In response to this, the OLA will be publishing a “Boating Safety Guide” that should be available by June 1. The guide contains general and lake-specific tips for plying Oneida’s waters. Among the topics addressed are visibility and night navigation, weather issues, boat inspections, vessel speed, annual water level draw-downs, PFDs, floating objects, and the extreme importance of planning every trip on Oneida Lake. While no boating advisory can possibly include every potential hazard or dangerous navigational condition, the OLA’s boating safety publication harbors a tremendous quantity of excellent advice. All lake users should own a copy.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has graciously granted the OLA permission to use its Oneida Lake navigational map. Most of the lake’s trouble spots will be conspicuously color-marked on the map and many of the primary hazards encountered while using the lake’s channel will be listed and explained. Space will not allow an enumeration of shoreline danger points, but the majority of these will be color-marked. Remember that ice erosion, depth changes, water-borne debris, and powerful storms can change the lake, increasing navigational “red zones” and adding to the number of problem areas that any lake map outlines. Maps are guides and none offers a perfect projection.

The OLA Board believes that those who respect Oneida Lake and plan their voyages accordingly will reap the lake’s maximum rewards. The board’s goal in publishing this map is to witness a reduction to “zero” in the number of annual

boating accidents on the lake.

The association wishes to note an excellent publication by the (Lower) South Bay Volunteer Fire Department, an altruistic, public-spirited organization that shares our concerns. The department’s upcoming boating safety pamphlet details who to call, when to call them, and how to respond when boating crises occur. The publication makes a clear distinction between emergency and non-emergency situations. For example, the lake area’s fire departments should not

be called when boats lose propulsion, run out of fuel, or when the operator needs directions. The departments exist to help navigators in truly urgent situations such as collisions, fires, and severe personal injuries. The South Bay pamphlet talks about marine radio channels and the Coast Guard’s role and, in doing so, offers invaluable advice for anyone confronting trouble on the water. The OLA praises the department for its contribution to safe Oneida Lake navigation.

Why Boating Safety Matters: A Treacherous Day in 1885

Prior to the development of Doppler radar and related meteorological advancements, forecasting violent weather presented challenges. Human instinct was the best weather sensor for nineteenth century lake boatmen and this “radar” could easily malfunction. Oneida Lake’s fast-moving storms create dangerous conditions that test the most experienced navigator. Boat-building families like the Damons of Bridgeport and the Miltons of Brewerton crafted heavy, wooden-ribbed rowing vessels in response to the lake’s potential turbulence. In a storm, only those rugged boats and their occupants’ skills separated safety and tragedy.

Imagine being on Oneida Lake during the following tempest, described by Cleveland’s *Lakeside Press* on May 19, 1885.

“A terrific cyclone, the worst ever experienced here in Constantia, struck this village Thursday afternoon between the hours of four and five.

It had been raining for some time, when the wind suddenly increased in violence, moving all before it. In Carter’s grove, at least 100 trees were blown down and shade trees and outhouses all over the village were leveled.

A barn belonging to Mr. Batchelor was struck by the tornado and the roof and timbers scattered in all directions. The chimneys on his house were blown away and the fences laid flat. The slates from the roof of the railroad depot building were torn from their fastenings and carried away into different parts of the village. The spire of Trinity Episcopal Church was blown down and carried several rods, falling through the roof of a barn owned by W.J. Jones. A large barn belonging to Ira and A.P. Brown went down before the force of the storm, nearly killing Mrs. Abram Brown, her son, and Daniel Northrop, who were driving along the road. As the storm came upon them in its fury, they found it impossible to proceed against it, and they got out and lay with their faces to the ground until it passed.

Robert Black and three other men were out fishing on the lake at the time and fears were entertained for their safety. During the night, however, they arrived home safe. The storm struck them when they were within half a mile of Frenchman’s Island, but by Black’s superior skill as an oarsman, he made the island safely, though thoroughly drenched. At times, the air was filled with so much water that they could not see each other.

The storm, which was about two and a half miles wide, was of short duration. There is not a whole fence to be found standing in Constantia.”

Hundreds of other harrowing stories populate Oneida Lake’s navigational history. Every tale underscores boating safety’s importance. Careful planning for any Oneida Lake voyage is an *absolute necessity*.

Don't Miss the Annual Meeting!

Monday April 29 • 7 pm - Cicero-North Syracuse High School

Members - mark your calendars! The OLA's annual meeting will be held at Cicero-North Syracuse High School, located on Route 31 just east of Cicero village, on Monday April 29 at 7:00 p.m. Doors will open at 6:00 p.m. so that members and visitors can enjoy our exhibits. A short business meeting begins at seven, followed by our speakers.

As usual, OLA directors and their assistants will operate a membership sign-up booth so that past members can renew and new folks join our vital organization. Let's set a goal for sign-ups at the annual meeting. If you're renewing, sponsor at least one friend or family member for OLA membership. If you're a new member, register another person who shares your concerns about Oneida Lake's future. If everyone brings a fellow lake lover into the association, we can double our membership, which translates to crucial political clout.

Excellent exhibits should enthrall those who attend our meeting. People arriving before seven can view the Fish Creek-Atlantic Salmon Club's display, which articulates that groups' attempt to restore an Oneida Lake native fish. Cornell Research Associate Tom Brookings will staff his popular lake sturgeon booth. The United States' Coast Guard Auxiliary's boat inspection model always draws interest. A local taxidermist will show his life-like mounts.

"If you see a violation, call the DEC!" That advice echoes the meeting's "law enforcement" theme. One of our featured speakers is Captain Matthew Revenaugh, who commands the ECOs (game wardens) in Region 7. Revenaugh joined a panel of DEC personnel that discussed enforcement issues with the OLA Board in January (re: this *Bulletin's* front page article). He is an excellent speaker whose "law on the lake" presentation should

answer many questions.

In addition to Captain Revenaugh, other fascinating speakers highlight the evening's program. Cornell biologist Randy Jackson will present his informative "state of the lake" power point. David Lemon, the DEC's Fisheries' Manager for Region Seven, will discuss the department's expanded cormorant hazing program. The new hatchery manager for our Constantia facility will outline the fruits of this year's walleye "run." And, for the walleye zealots among us, an expert angler promises to share his proven techniques, honed during the annual walleye "circuit." His methodology will aptly demonstrate Oneida Lake's uniqueness as a walleye fishery.

For the second consecutive year, the OLA has scheduled a free fishing charter drawing at the annual meeting, exclusively for children under sixteen. Eligible youth can sign up at the meeting! This year's charter features an "outing for three in 2013" with veteran Captain Ray Brown. Two family members should accompany the young angler who wins this drawing. OLA membership, while not required, is encouraged. The association is proud to offer this chance for a unique voyage into Oneida Lake angling as a part of its time-proven tenet that the combination of "kids and fishing" helps insure the lake's future.

The meeting concludes with the drawing for the Captain Ray Brown charter, and with other door prize selections.

The OLA can only meet the future's challenges with your support. Make sure that you attend this tremendous annual meeting! Mark your calendars - Monday April 29 - OLA - C-NS! Your board of directors looks forward to joining you there for an evening of Oneida Lake fellowship.

Notice of Board of Directors' Elections

Attention OLA members! Don't miss your chance to vote at the 2013 annual meeting, to be held Monday, April 29 at Cicero-North Syracuse High School auditorium. Members in good standing who attend the meeting will have the opportunity to vote on the following slate of eight OLA members who are seeking re-election to three-year terms on the OLA's Board of Directors: Patricia Cerro-Reehil, Warren Darby, Thomas Giufre, Thomas Pierce, William Schriever, Kurt Snyder, Matthew Snyder, and Lance Vella.

Dancks Named to OLA Board

The OLA Board of Directors takes this opportunity to warmly welcome Thérèse Dancks to the organization's governing body. A resident of the lake basin and a zealous angler, Thérèse brings a wealth of expertise and an impressive community service background to the association.

Admitted to the New York State Bar in 1992, Thérèse graduated from LeMoyne College in 1985 and the Syracuse University College of Law in 1991. She partnered in the firm of Gale and Dancks until 2012 and is currently employed by the judicial system.

Active in both the Onondaga County Bar and the Women's Bar Association of New York, Thérèse believes strongly in the values of community and commitment. She has served on the board of directors of the Hiscock Legal Aid Society, the St. Elizabeth Hospital College of Nursing, and the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation. In addition, she has bestowed her talents upon LeMoyne's Career Advisory Network, the Central New York Domestic Violence Coalition, and the Matilda Jocelyn Gage Foundation. And, in a true liberal arts tradition, she has published in the Syracuse University Law Review and umpired for the Fayetteville-Manlius Girls' Softball League!

Welcome aboard Thérèse Dancks!

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Volunteers Wanted!

Your Oneida Lake Association's outreach program involves staffing exhibition booths at regional sport shows. Directors' commitments occasionally conflict with scheduling, leaving difficult gaps in coverage. We invite all association members to volunteer to fill these gaps. Working these shows creates a unique opportunity to promote the OLA and share great fellowship with scores of dedicated, fascinating outdoorspersons.

Any interested members should contact the board through our website - www.oneidalakeassociation.org.



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