



Oneida Lake Association
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Greetings!

NYS Budget Crunch: OLA Puts an Oar in the Water

Like you, the Oneida Lake Association Board of Directors has been following the news about Covid-19 related economic impacts. One of the issues that has the attention of the Board is that New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo has promised state budget cuts, some of which may impact Oneida Lake programs that our members rely on.

To address the problem, this summer the Board started an in-depth study and prioritization of Oneida Lake-specific state programs. Board members considered more than 20 programs and ranked them according to which ones are most valuable to the lake, which programs' destinies we are likely to be able to influence, and which programs are most closely aligned with the interests of our membership. **The Board then unanimously approved a resolution calling for preservation of funds for Oneida Lake law enforcement; New York State Department of Environmental Conservation staff and support for game fish production and protection; and advancement of a comprehensive water quality plan for Oneida Lake.** We are taking this resolution to all the relevant agency heads, commissioners, the Governor, and local elected officials and asking them to do their part to protect Oneida Lake in these challenging times.

Although we can't make decisions for the New York State government, we can and will do our best to help them make appropriate decisions for Oneida Lake. There's no doubt that the coming years will be financially challenging for many people and many agencies. Rest assured that OLA will do everything we can to protect and promote Oneida Lake. We ask that you, our members, be ready to do your part by writing letters and calling your elected officials with your concerns for the lake. We'll keep you posted as we learn more.

~**Matt Snyder, OLA Director**

Here is a look at the budget priorities we identified in our resolution:

"OLA has identified three highest-priority targets to preserve or enhance funding in the FY 2022 budget:

***New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) staffing levels**
DEC funding for the Oneida Fish Cultural Station, seasonal staff, and technicians in Region 6 and Region 7. These programs and staff are the backbone of Oneida Lake walleye stocking, cormorant management, invasive species monitoring and management, and other activities needed to preserve Oneida Lake's natural resources.

***Law enforcement**

Law enforcement: State grants that support the Onondaga, Oswego, Oneida, and Madison County Sheriffs' marine patrols; and Department of Environmental Conservation funding for environmental conservation officer academies and equipment.

***Oneida Lake's 9-Element Plan**

The New York State contract with Madison County (involving Cornell University, the Upstate Freshwater Institute, and the CNY Regional Planning and Development Board) to complete the 9-Element Plan for Oneida Lake, without which Oneida Lake cannot compete for Federal and State water quality funding opportunities (see update below).

The Oneida Lake Association calls on all New York State elected officials and agency managers to advocate for funding for DEC's Oneida Lake staff and programs, the 9-Element Plan, and Oneida Lake law enforcement, in order to protect and promote one of Central New York's most economically and socially valuable natural resources."

What's the Latest News on the City of Oneida Wastewater Plant?

In the last issue of E-News we reported that the City of Oneida Wastewater Treatment Plant was experiencing operational problems that resulted in poor effluent quality and impacts to Oneida Creek. Significant visual impacts were observed in Oneida Creek for several miles downstream of the wastewater plant which is located in the City of Oneida, approximately 10 miles from Oneida Lake. Plant operations were restored and the plant was meeting discharge limits for a period of time. However, the plant has experienced multiple operational issues in November and early December. While the issues do not appear to be as severe as the first incident that began in late September and lasted several weeks into October, these recent problems show a track record of a plant that is having exceptional difficulties maintaining compliance.

The City of Oneida Wastewater Plant reported the following notifications on the NY-Alert reporting system. The plant is required to notify the DEC of these instances and report them to the public through the NY-Alert system. (see the article below for more info on this system).

November 26, 2020 - Settling issues caused by filamentous bacteria
November 27, 2020 - Settling problems caused by filamentous bacteria
December 2, 2020 - Settling problems caused by filamentous bacteria
December 7, 2020 - Operational problem caused by plugged siphon tubes
December 13, 2020 - Broken siphon tube resulting in settleable solids violation

The Oneida Wastewater Plant uses an activated sludge treatment process to break down and settle incoming wastewater. The activated sludge is a culture of bacteria and organisms that is specifically controlled to optimize treatment and settleability of sludge. The sludge is sent to a settling tank called a clarifier where the sludge settles. Some sludge is removed from the system, dewatered and sent to a landfill. The remaining sludge is recycled back to the activated sludge tank to maintain the culture of bacteria and organisms. If this culture gets out of balance, performance problems can arise. The formation of excess filaments as reported above can result in poor settling and poor effluent quality. Filaments can be caused by a number of factors, including: industrial loading, insufficient oxygen, poor operations, and many others. The DEC is currently negotiating with the City of Oneida to resolve violations at the plant. The final settlement should include a penalty and list of required corrective actions to resolve these operational issues. When DEC has finalized their enforcement on this matter, OLA will report the outcome to our members.

NY-Alert System

As an Oneida Lake user, you probably have a variety of tools that help you safely enjoy the lake: personal flotation devices, lights, flares, charts, depth sounders, and GPS to name a few. Here's another tool to add to your collection: NY-Alert, which is a free, public, online portal and notification system.

State and local agencies use NY-Alert to send real-time mass notifications, like weather shutdowns and Amber Alerts. But as a member of the public, you are entitled to many more categories of information. You can select which state, county, and town agencies can send you alerts. And you can choose to have information delivered to you by e-mail, text message, or even get alerts by phone call.

Some of the NY-Alert topics of specific interest to Oneida Lake Association members include:

- Marine-specific weather advisories, like small craft warnings and special marine weather statements.
- Sewage discharge notifications, so you can know if treatment facilities near you are operating correctly.
- Localized severe weather warnings, so you can stay safe around the water.
- Traffic alerts so you can safely drive to your favorite fishing hole.

It is free to sign up and use NY-Alert, and New York State has published an enrollment guide that includes complete, step-by-step instructions to set up an account and select what types of notifications you receive. OLA recommends NY-Alert as part of your basic safety toolkit.

Ice Fishing Safety by Bill Girvan, OLA President

There should be good numbers of active Walleye, Yellow Perch, and other Panfish ready to respond to your fishing presentations this winter. As you are getting ready for your first trip out, at the very top of your checklist should be Safety First!

First and foremost there needs to be safe ice with the lake locked in. Four inches of good, uniform ice should be safe for walking. No need to venture out too far early in the season as ice thickness could be less as you travel farther from shore. When riding ATVs or snowmobiles to tow your shelters, you should have 6 inches of good ice to be safe, plus you need to wear a safety helmet to be legal. Your machines need to be registered, as well. Always stay away from areas where creeks flow in or out of the lake, especially during those warm periods we get each year as the ice is not safe in those areas. Also watch yourself by cracks and gas holes. Keep your eyes open and be aware of the conditions every time you go out on the ice.



The most recent issue of *In-Fisherman* magazine also focused on ice fishing safety. **The article stated that ice fishing causes more trips to hospitals than any other**

type of fishing! Bad falls on the ice can cause a variety of serious injuries. Also, there are many sharp items such as ice spuds and ice augers with very sharp blades. Portable heaters can cause burns, and impaled hooks happen more often than you might think.

Although hypothermia is always a threat, in recent years manufacturers have made much better clothing for ice anglers including bibs and coats with flotation built in them in case you go through the ice. Having a good set of warm boots that do not leak are a must, and cleats on the bottom of your boots are very important to help avoid falling on the ice.

It's always a good idea to have a rope with you just in case someone falls through the ice. Hand-held ice picks also improve the odds of a self-rescue. While "First Ice" can provide a very enticing bite, be careful and have an ice spud to keep checking the ice thickness for safety.

With all of these dangers in mind, it makes sense that ice fishing is a sport you should always try to do with at least one other person, as it really increases your safety. Although that's still true, we can't forget the new twist this Ice Season which is COVID-19. Everyone needs to consistently follow the current guidelines, even on the ice. For example, having multiple anglers inside of an ice shelter would be a risky situation. Let's avoid this practice this season. This is a good year to use your one-person shelter. And wave to your buddies six jack perch away!

Remember, consistency is the major key when it comes to safety while ice fishing. No fish is worth losing your life. Pay attention to the weather reports as whiteouts can happen very quickly on Oneida Lake. Bring and use your compass or GPS, and assess the weather conditions often throughout the day.

Finally, please try to get along with other anglers in the parking areas and do not leave any trash on Oneida Lake or at any of the parking lots. As always follow the DEC Fish and Game Regulations as the daily limit of Walleye is still 3 fish that are at least 15 inches. The Yellow Perch daily limit is still 50 fish any size. Selective harvest really comes into play as each angler has that option to keep fewer Yellow Perch, as 10 or 12 makes a few good meals, and it's a lot easier cleaning few fish, too.

We hope everyone has a safe and enjoyable time on Oneida Lake during this ice fishing season. **Always think safety first!**

Update on the Nine-Element Plan for Oneida Lake

After considerable delay, the Oneida Lake Watershed Nine-Element Management plan contract has finally been executed. This contract, which was listed above as one of our budget priorities, allows important lake-related projects to move forward in 2021. Development of a 9 Element Watershed Plan will outline a strategy to improve water quality in the Oneida Lake Watershed. This will aid funding agencies in their efforts to direct limited funds to the most beneficial projects. Most state and federal grant scoring criteria allow additional points for projects that include best management practices identified in a 9 Element Watershed Plan. In addition to improving funding opportunities, completion of this plan will increase our understanding of Oneida Lake, which is always a good thing.

**The Board of Directors of the OLA
wishes you a safe and**

Happy Christmas, and a New Year filled
with Hope!



Would you like to Help the Oneida Lake Association?

We are looking for dedicated volunteers to serve on the Board of Directors for the Oneida Lake Association. If you'd like to help us carry on the mission of the Oneida Lake Association and help us Preserve and Protect our beautiful lake, this is the time to think seriously about stepping up.

The BOD currently has two Director vacancies. We need individuals who have people skills and an interest with interaction with the academic and government professionals. Good writing and technology skills are a bonus.

Directors serve 2-year terms, meet once a month, and may spend 3-6 hours a month on OLA business.

Each Director must serve on at least one standing committee, volunteer for special events, and anticipate advancement to an officer's position.

If you have an interest in serving OLA, please reach out to one of the Directors. Our contact info is on our website.

Write out your avocational resume, personal interests, and a professional background summary. Send them by snail or email to any OLA Director, or to President@OneidaLakeAssociation.org

Member's **FISHING TIPS.**

Feel free to offer up some of *your* short hints, tips, and tricks.

Here are classic tips from H.G. Tapply writing in *Field and Stream*.

<https://www.fieldandstream.com/32-vintage-fishing-tips/>

MEMBER QUESTIONS?

Send your questions and opinions to President@OneidaLakeAssociation.org

Pay your dues, and **HELP PROTECT ONEIDA LAKE!!!!**

\$8 annually

Recruit your neighbors and friends **TO JOIN US!**

Donate



Memorials and contributions to our program are most welcome.

OLA is a 501(c)4 organization serving and protecting the Oneida Lake environment.



[Website](#) [Who We Are](#) [What We Do](#) [How to Help](#)

OLA is a 501(c)(4) not-for-profit organization.

The Oneida Lake Association is a member of the New York State Conservation Council <http://www.nyscc.com/> and the New York State Federation of Lake Associations <http://www.nysfola.org/>.

Please remember to obey all laws, rules, regulations, and codes of ethics as they pertain to boating, fishing, hunting, and the management of Oneida Lake and its tributaries.

[Report environmental violations.](#)

1-844-DEC-ECOS (1-844-332-3267)

Edited by John Harmon and Matt Snyder

Send us your notes and articles for use in future ENews!