



Oneida Lake Association
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Greetings!

Environmental Benefit Project to Facilitate Debris Removal in Oneida Creek

The City of Oneida Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) is located on Oneida Creek about 10 1/2 miles upstream from Oneida Lake. Discharges from the WWTP are regulated by a State Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (SPDES) permit issued by NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). The City of Oneida WWTP SPDES Permit assigns discharge limits that are protective of water quality in Oneida Creek and Oneida Lake. When performing correctly, the culture of microorganisms at the WWTP breakdown incoming wastes and remove contaminants, resulting in a highly polished discharge. In late September 2020, the Oneida WWTP experienced performance problems that resulted in discharge of partially treated sewage to Oneida Creek in violation of the City of Oneida's SPDES Permit.

DEC's investigation revealed that the performance problems were attributed to a host of issues at the wastewater plant and high strength loading from industrial dischargers. On June 17, 2021, NYS DEC executed a legal agreement, called an Order on Consent (Order), with the City of Oneida to address the violations. The Order includes a number of requirements that are needed to improve operational reliability of the WWTP. The Order requires the WWTP to implement protocols for improving oversight of industrial loadings, operational improvements, and significant equipment upgrades. The WWTP implemented a number of these improvements and has been operating substantially better. Full WWTP upgrades are scheduled to be completed by December 31, 2023.

The Order also requires the City of Oneida to pay a \$10,000 penalty and fund a \$40,000 Environmental Benefit Project (EBP). The EBP funds will be used for woody debris removal activities in Oneida Creek, downstream of the City of Oneida wastewater treatment facility. Spring runoff and high water conditions often result in an abundance of woody debris accumulation in Oneida Creek. This can have a negative impact on water quality, as it can disrupt/change water flow patterns that destabilize stream banks, and cause flooding. Proactive removal of leaning trees can avoid this bank erosion, and clearing of snags or logjams allows for access and recreation for anglers and paddlers that has otherwise been restricted.

It is hopeful that this action will also reduce the amount of woody debris entering Oneida Lake. The Towns of Lenox and Verona have committed \$5,000.00

in their annual budgets towards the project, and committed to continuing to doing this for the next 4 years. Work is proposed to begin later this year when field conditions allow. The EBP money has kick-started a program that local governments can continue on an annual basis to help manage this issue in the future.

~by OLA Director Matt Kazmierski

Attention Waterfowl Hunters! How was your season?



For more than 25 years, the Oneida Lake Association has had a seat at the table advising the DEC on how to set waterfowl seasons within federal frameworks for season dates and limits.

It is our experience that in recent seasons, especially 2021, the duck and goose hunting on Oneida Lake have been worse than expected. Waterfowl migrations have been smaller than usual, ducks and geese moved to the lake outside of the open season dates, or both. At our January meeting, the Board agreed that we should explore the problem in depth, and look for ways to make things better for hunters who use Oneida Lake.

Right now, we are asking you to take a moment to e-mail president@oneidalakeassociation.org with your thoughts on:

1. How your hunting has gone in recent seasons,
2. Your impressions of the migration patterns for the waterfowl species that you most frequently target, and
3. Any other thoughts you have about the seasons and limits, where and how you hunt on Oneida Lake, suggestions for further study, etc.

We ask that you keep your feedback specific to your experience on Oneida Lake, please. We'll compare your notes with what we learn from an extensive review of recent scientific studies and hunter harvest data, share what we learn, and keep OLA members updated about any new recommendations we make through the season-setting task force.

Thank you for considering our request for help!
~by OLA Director Matt Snyder

DEC Invites Your Input on Fishing Regulations

In late December, DEC issued a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking to simplify the State's fishing regulations. The proposal presented will also significantly reduce the number of special regulations found in the annual Fishing Regulations Guide. The changes are being proposed to make fishing easier and to break down potential barriers for newcomers to the sport, while still ensuring that our fisheries resources are managed in a sustainable manner.

Highlights of these changes include:

- Changing the statewide regulation for rainbow trout and brown trout in ponds to allow for year-round fishing.
- Aligning harvest limits for rainbow trout, brown trout and brook trout across streams and ponds at five fish per day no minimum size, only two of which can be over 12”.
- Changing the statewide regulations for Atlantic Salmon and lake trout to allow for year-round fishing.
- **Normalizing season dates so all openers for sportfish begin on a hard date.**
- Allow ice fishing statewide unless specifically prohibited in all but 9 Adirondack counties, where the existing regulation prohibiting ice fishing in waters inhabited by trout will remain.

These changes are being proposed to help you, the angler, and we are eager to receive your opinion and comments on these regulation changes before **the official comment period closes on February 6.**

Submit comments on the proposal via e-mail toregulations.fish@dec.ny.gov or via mail to the Inland Fisheries Section, NYSDEC, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233-4753; subject line "Fishing Regulations Proposal Comments." Comments will be accepted through February 6, 2022.



DEC ANNOUNCES PROGRESS IN LAKE STURGEON RECOVERY

*New York's Rebounding
Population
Meets Another Recovery
Goal*

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation today announced the release of the 2021 Lake Sturgeon Population Assessment Status Report. The report demonstrates that the lake sturgeon population in the Upper St. Lawrence River has exceeded crucial metrics set forth in the [Lake Sturgeon Recovery Plan](#) for adult spawning and juvenile recruitment.

“Lake sturgeon are rebounding in New York State, and that’s great news,” said Commissioner Basil Seggos. “This progress is possible because of the work of dedicated staff at DEC, and our strong partnerships with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Geological Survey, Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe, New York Power Authority, and Cornell University. Together, we have secured funding, raised and released sturgeon, and used science to track our success, and DEC looks forward to continuing these effective collaborations.”

The Lake Sturgeon Recovery Plan, written in 2018, set the following goal for lake sturgeon in New York State: “Establish or maintain sufficient self-sustaining populations of lake sturgeon within six of the seven management units to warrant removal of lake sturgeon from the list of threatened species in New York.”

With the addition of the Upper St. Lawrence Management Unit, the lake sturgeon population has now reached the target in four of the seven management units. When the population reaches the target level in two more management units, DEC will seek to remove lake sturgeon from the [threatened species list](#).

Lake sturgeon have been on New York's threatened species list since 1983. DEC began its lake sturgeon restoration program in 1993 by stocking four sites. In 2021, DEC and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service stocked 10 locations. More than 275,000 lake sturgeon have been stocked into New York waters since 1993.

Lake sturgeon can live for more than 100 years and grow to seven feet in length, making them the largest freshwater fish in New York. Because of this long lifespan and delayed sexual maturity, lake sturgeon are incredibly vulnerable to overfishing and population depletion. Anglers deserve credit for being good stewards of New York's aquatic resources and helping to keep lake sturgeon populations on the rise.

Director of the Cornell University Biological Field Station on Oneida Lake, Lars Gosta Rudstam, said, "Lake sturgeon is now part of the Oneida Lake ecosystem. These iconic fishes are reproducing in the lake and growing to impressive sizes. Last year, we were able to tag one 26 year old fish that weighed almost 160 pounds. This a wonderful development."

The [2021 Lake Sturgeon Population Assessment](#) is available on DEC's website. For more information about lake sturgeon in New York, see [DEC's Lake Sturgeon Recovery Plan](#).

For more information on how DEC tracks lake sturgeon, visit [this link](#) from DEC's YouTube page.

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.



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!