



Oneida Lake Association
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Greetings!

Hello again members and friends. What a summer so far! Canal Corp has no difficulty managing its gauge curve for lake levels this month, with this drought – least amount of rainfall recorded. Sunny and hot, “just the way we like it!” I overheard a pair of bass boats salute this morning – there were at least two BASS and one Walleye tournaments on the lake at sunrise. Scores of pleasure craft motored to Sylvan Beach or Three Mile Bay, the PWC’s, tubers, skiers, kayakers and party boats were out in force all afternoon. By sunset the lake was calm and empty, save a few evening boats in search of deep walleye.

For some of you this is the first time you have gotten this electronic newsletter from the OLA. The Spring Meeting membership cards with your email were recorded and scrubbed for current and future use. We hope that you enjoy this monthly dialogue. We expect some feedback (otherwise this is a monologue) via emails or Facebook.

Here is 'the news'!

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WATER CHESTNUT UPDATE: Volunteers will pull weeds July 29 from the Big Bay area. If you have an interest in helping, contact an OLA Director ASAP.

Sadly, we have confirmation of a new infestation off Lewis Point. We had an unconfirmed report last season, but Roy Widrig of Onondaga County Cornell Cooperative Extension and Tom Brookings from Cornell Biological Research Station confirmed the report this week, indicating presence of several plants. OLA asks residents of the area and anglers/boaters in this area of the lake to

pull the weeds. Put them in a plastic bag and dispose of them in the trash (if you cannot otherwise compost them well inland). To identify the plant **visit the OLA website** and review **Bob Johnson's description of vegetation** common in Oneida Lake or see <http://www.sleloinvasives.org/about-invasives/target-species/water-chestnut/>.

NEW DIRECTOR: John Harmon of Cicero was elected to the Board of Directors July 11. John is a retired Skaneateles teacher and Curriculum Coordinator. John has editing and writing skills with an environmental avocation that will serve us well on the Education and Outreach Committee (including enhancing the OLA Bulletin and *E-NEWS*).

The Board hopes to fill the one remaining vacancy with someone from the east end of our membership. We especially are interested in someone with some legal or regulatory background. If you have an interest, or know of someone who may be, please contact a Director.

WATCH THE STICKER ON THE PUMP: A newly released survey by Boating Industry magazine points to ethanol as playing an even "bigger role" in service issues than it was just a year ago, with 87% of respondents reporting seeing boat engine damage caused by ethanol, up from 73 percent in the same survey in April 2015. The survey, sent to a mix of readers from dealerships, marinas, engine and boat manufacturers around the country, was answered in April and May. Most notably, many respondents raised concerns of misfueling at roadside gas stations.

Signed into law in 2005, the Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS) requires an increasing amount of biofuels such as corn ethanol to be blended into the gasoline supply. When it was written, the RFS assumed that America's use of gasoline would continue to grow. Since 2005, however, gasoline usage has actually declined steadily which today forces more ethanol into each gallon of gas. To keep up with the RFS mandate, in 2010 the EPA permitted E15 (fuel containing up to 15% ethanol) into the marketplace. Even though E15 is prohibited for use in marine engines, snowmobiles, motorcycles, lawnmowers, and any vehicle made before 2001, it can now be found in 23 states (but not NY?). Boat Owners Association of The United States (BoatUS) is urging all recreational boaters to send a message today urging the EPA to lower the ethanol mandates.

BRIDGEPORT CHITTENANGO CREEK PADDLEFEST: Starts at Stones Marina off North Road from **12-5 PM July 31**. Fun family event with prizes is aimed at kayakers, paddleboarders and canoeists or those interested in just spending a day 'up the creek' or wanting to play in the Bounce-house, Horseshoes, or Volleyball! Participation contribution is \$10 per person, \$15 per couple. Kids under 15 free when accompanied by an adult. Pre-Sale Tickets will be available at the Chapman Park Concerts. This event is being sponsored by the **Bridgeport-Lakeport Civic Organization and others**.

ONEIDA SHORES PARK BOAT RAMP IMPROVEMENTS: Onondaga County Department of Parks and Recreation has applied for permit 7-3122-00034/00009 from NYSDEC under Article 15 Title 5 Excavation & Fill in Navigable Waters and Section 401 - Clean Water Act Water Quality Certification. It proposes to repair and expand the Oneida Shores Park boat launch. The existing concrete boat ramp will be

enlarged lakeward 4,535 sq. ft, and 239.26 cu yds of stone rip rap will be used for lakebed scour protection at the toe of the new concrete pad. A temporary cofferdam will be installed and water will be pumped out of the work area during construction. Sediment and turbidity will be contained to the work area and will not discharge into the lake.

BOATLAUNCH STEWARDS. Amy Samuels, Education and Outreach Coordinator for the Onondaga Environmental Institute asks that anyone interested in volunteering as a boat steward should contact her via phone (315 443-1757) or e-mail, asamuels@oei2.org

Boaters are reminded to remove any visible plant or animal from their boat, trailer, or equipment prior to launching a boat and again prior to leaving the boat launch. Also all bilge areas, live wells, bait wells and ballast tanks should be drained prior to launching and before leaving the boat launch.

MORE FROM THE BOOK:

Continuing some of the discussions regarding relationships of physical, chemical, and biotic components of the lake that contribute to algal blooms, this month we are again referencing "*Oneida Lake: Long-Term Dynamics of a Managed Ecosystem and its Fishery*" as edited by a number of our associates at Cornell, published by the American Fisheries Society earlier this year.

Prior to the arrival of zebra mussels, Phosphorous (P) was a water quality issue, with concentrations over 100 micrograms per liter (μL). Now, with concentrations in the range of 20-30 μL (or lower) scientists are speaking of the "oligotrophication" of Oneida Lake. For reference, in the old days we spoke of Oneida as eutrophic and the Finger Lakes as oligotrophic.

Since the 1970's the concentration of P has dropped. Restrictions on lawn fertilizers, elimination of P in detergents, added municipal sewer systems, improved septic designs, and new storm water erosion management has somewhat reduced nutrient-laden sediments from entering streams. Cornell's long term data sets for plankton indicate this reduction in P has changed the lake, especially since zebra mussels arrived.

A concern now is for decreasing levels of algal carbon (C). As the P loading declines, the C concentration is

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copepods



Daphnia

More mobile copepods can be more

conversely higher. Now with a C:P ratio under 300 there is concern that the Daphnia, on which young perch and walleye feed, population numbers may drop below a level at which the zooplankton can maintain itself.

Total algal carbon has declined from 0.63 mg/L to 0.28 mg/L after zebra mussels began water filtration. After 2005 zooplankton biomass (both Daphnia and copepods – see photos) declined. Blue-green (BG or cyanobacteria) algae are essentially non-edible for the herbivore Daphnia. Important zooplankton like Daphnia are non-selective filter feeders. It needs a healthy green algae concentration in the water column.

selective when grazing. Daphnia may graze/consume BG algae, and thereby 'miss' the more nutritious green algae when the lake has a bloom of cyanobacteria colonies. In blooms the total phytoplankton biomass is high, but the 'best' food of Daphnia could be limited.

Light penetration increased, leading to more photosynthesis, but it is by plants that do not help the base of the food chain for juvenile fishes like perch, walleye, gizzard shad, and buckeye that the larger fish prey on. In these post-zebra mussel years both food quality and quantity could be limiting the Daphnia, despite compensating mechanisms that the zooplankton have for surviving on meager rations. There is growing concern that the salmonid fishery of some of the Great Lakes is imperiled by a similar reduction in prey fish size and health, consequent to 'improved' water quality. Further lowering of phosphorus in our waters may not be a good thing.

BEACH CLOSURES:

In earlier *e-NEWS* we have provided some of the physical, chemical, and biotic community processes in Oneida Lake, developing some lay background regarding changes. We have been leading up to a discussion of health advisories that lead to beach closures attributed to algae blooms. The OLA Board has some concern that media portrayal of a natural part of Oneida Lake's nature has caused many CNY residents to opine that the lake is "dirty", "polluted", "filthy green" and generally a lousy place to recreate. Too many people now equate blue green algae blooms with sewerage bacteria. Some now fear letting their dog swim in the lake for fear of poisoning! We hope to better frame your perspective of Oneida Lake's health, and yours!

Oneida Lake today has sewer systems in all of its major tributaries, and circling the lake in all but about maybe 15 miles of its 55 miles of shoreline. This is a guess, for the complete documentation of extant and planned systems is not readily available in GIS databases. Based on parcel and real property data, there are over 600 developed properties in Onondaga County with frontage on Oneida Lake. According to our sewer folks, the vast majority of those are on sewers.

The numbers for Madison, Oneida, and Oswego were not obtained. Much of the south shore, but from Shackleton Point to Lakeport, is on sewer. A system is planned and awaits funding in West Monroe and Hastings for the Wedgeworth Point area and over to Brewerton. Sullivan has polled residents, and is evaluating a new district for the area north of Route 31, contingent upon funding support from Albany and Washington.

The takeaway is that algae is not the likely culprit when officials decide to close beaches. The weather and lake's physical chemistry are the triggering agents. The protocols of the officials varies somewhat, but follow a general formula based on water sampling for pollution.

Common reasons for beach closures include:

- Exceedance – Bacterial indicator levels exceed the state standard
- Predicted exceedance: Model – A model based on environmental conditions predicts that water quality is poor
- Predicted exceedance: Rainfall – Because of recent heavy rain, it is predicted that water quality is poor
- High waves – Waves or rough conditions
- Turbidity – Cloudy water that could prevent lifeguards from being able to see swimmers
- No lifeguard – When lifeguards are not available, beaches are closed
- Closed for end of season – Beach closed for the season
- Cold water – Temperatures below 50°F

For instance, at Verona Beach State Park, it is up to the manager of the park to close the beach. State Parks has set procedures to follow regarding E Coli numbers and such that managers follow but each manager makes the call. Especially when it comes to blue green algae. NYSOPR & HP environmental management bureau in Albany writes most of the procedures and consults with managers regarding beach water quality. State Parks is unique in that it does not defer to the local county health department for our beach closures.

State Parks posts on its website the results of weekly. Here's a link to the test results and some info on bathing beaches: <http://parks.ny.gov/recreation/swimming/beach-results/>. NYSDEC has some information on blue green algae at <http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/77118.html>, and a map of the blooms across the state at <http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/83310.html>. For additional information visit: [The NYS Department of Health sanitary code](#).

State Park beaches are sampled at least once a week for bacterial indicators of impaired water quality. Freshwater samples are analyzed for *Escherichia coli* (*E.coli*). A result equal to or above 235 *E. coli* colonies/100ml represents an exceedance of the state standard. Test results are available approximately 24 hours after the samples are taken, as sample analysis takes approximately 18-24 hours. Results will be posted daily at the park office and posted at the beach when there is an exceedance, results can also be accessed from this page and through a link available on the webpage of each park with a swimming beach. State Park beaches are closed when there is a known or anticipated risk to public health or safety. Beach signs will be posted and the public notified 18-24 hours after an elevated concentration of bacteria occurs. The causes of elevated bacteria levels are not always clear. They may be related to land uses in the watershed; stormwater runoff; naturally occurring sand or soil bacteria; or other factors.

Closure decisions are based upon monitoring results in combination with other factors that influence water quality, including water conditions (sewage overflows, cold temperatures, or high waves), environmental conditions (thunderstorms, strong winds), and historical data. This historical data on the frequency of exceedances and the drop-off rates of indicator bacteria from beaches statewide has been used to assign beaches to one of two categories.

- *Category 1:* These are beaches with low rates of exceedance, satisfactory resample results within 24 hours, and/or wet sampling results.
- If these beaches are subject to an exceedance, they are immediately resampled. If other water quality factors are satisfactory at the time of resampling, the beach will remain open and the closure decision will be deferred until the resample results are obtained. The beaches are closed following an exceedance if other water quality factors (such as current weather or beach water conditions) are not satisfactory or if the sample exceeds a second time.
- *Category 2:* These are beaches without sufficient resampling data or with unsatisfactory resampling data.
- At these beaches, an exceedance leads to resampling and an automatic and immediate closure, along with notification of exceedance and alerts issued to the appropriate media outlets.

Parks maintains a daily list of beach conditions at <http://parks.ny.gov/recreation/swimming/beach-results/documents/results/BeachResults.pdf> and advises that for the most up to date status, call the park before you go.

Oswego and Oneida County did not respond to the OLA inquiry, but we can assume that they generally follow with what Aaron Lazzara of the Madison County Department of Health reported. Madison County has one beach on Oneida Lake, a small campground called Sunset Beach at Lewis Point in Lenox. Chapman Park Beach in Sullivan has been closed for a couple of years for budgetary (life guard) reasons.

The process for beach closure in Madison County is the following: Blue green algae conditions are visually observed in the bathing area by either the beach operator or staff from this department requires immediate closure and posting of closure. The NYSDOH Regional Office and NYSDEC along with the media are notified of closures. Reopening of the bathing area is twofold.

1. Visual observation that the bloom has moved out or dissipated from the bathing area for a minimum of 24 hours.
2. After 24 hours the water is tested onsite by our staff or by the beach operator. Any sample results with <10ppb of microcystin will make a bathing beach eligible for reopening. We have test kits here in our office but also require some bathing beach operators who have a history of BGA to have kits onsite as well. If blue green algae reappears in the bathing area the process begins again.

Blue green algae observed in a body of water but not in the bathing area requires advisory posting and continue visual observation. Madison, Onondaga and Oneida County all use the same test kits; presumably Oswego does as well for areas such as Taft Bay in Constantia.

Onondaga County Historically samples all county beaches for *E. coli* monthly during their operating season. Subpart 6-2 of the NYS Sanitary Code for bathing beaches recognizes 235 *E. coli* per 100 ml sample as the upper limit for acceptable bacterial levels at bathing beaches. A count above that level immediately warrants a repeat sample. If the second sample comes back above 235 *E. coli* per 100 ml the bathing beach operator is notified by Onondaga County Health Department that they are to close the beach. A press release is issued by the Health Department notifying the public of the closure, or if it's a county beach the County Parks Department may issue the press release. Onondaga then conducts a sanitary survey to try to determine the reason why the counts are up. It also will continue to sample daily until two samples with bacterial numbers below 235 *E. coli* per 100 ml are recorded. If water quality conditions are expected to remain acceptable the facility operator can reopen the beach.

According to Onondaga County's Dave Czerkies, "usually as the summer progresses and the water warms we start to see potential problems. Avian [geese] activity at the beaches increases, bacteria live longer, algae and aquatic vegetation all negatively impact water quality. Provided we have a typical summer the beaches are usually in pretty good shape throughout the summer. Major weather pattern changes or avian activity are usually what cause changes to water quality. Whenever we become aware (usually by the beach operator) of changes to the water quality through physical/chemical pollution or biological activity, we investigate, sample, continue to monitor and if necessary close the beach."

So, that is all for now. Please forward this email to any of your non-member friends and acquaintances who use Oneida Lake - especially you lakefront landowners! When issues arise that need the attention of your Board of Directors, there is strength in numbers.

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