



Oneida Lake Association
PO Box 3536 Syracuse, NY 13220-3536
info@oneidalakeassociation.org



Greetings!

WHAT'S UP?

This issue summarizes the discussions and presentations of the 72nd Annual Meeting of your organization. I trust that those of you attending were pleased!

With elections confirmed, Warren Darby will be your President for the next two years. It has been my pleasure to hold the office for the last three years, and I know that the full Board of Directors will support Warren in the transition.

Should you have ideas or concerns for the leadership to address, or if you care to ghostwrite an article in a newsletter, please reach out to one of us.

Enjoy the summer, safely, with friends. Post and circulate some activities to our Facebook page.

Scott

OLA's Conservationist of the Year

The Oneida Lake Association honored **Doug Stang**, Assistant Director of the Division of Fish and Wildlife in the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation,

as its 2017 OLA Conservationist of the Year. Conservationist of the Year is OLA's highest honor for people who protect Oneida Lake, and Stang was recognized for his 3-decade-plus effort to help Oneida Lake's fisheries and natural resources.

"It's safe to say Doug cares as much as we do about Oneida Lake," said OLA President Scott Shupe. **"Throughout his career in Region 7 and in Albany, he has always gone way above and beyond for Oneida Lake."**

The award was presented before an audience of 300 at OLA's 72nd annual membership meeting, which was May 3 in Cicero. By accepting the honor, Stang entered the equivalent of the Hall of Fame for Oneida Lake conservation. Previous honorees have included Rep. Jim Walsh, past Oneida Lake Fish Cultural Station Director Mark Babenzien, and Cornell Shackleton Station Director Emeritus John Forney.

Stang's contributions to Oneida Lake have been diverse and deeply felt, including his advocacy for sportsmen in fisheries management and his support for angler and boater access. One of Stang's most important achievements was to lead the development of New York State's cormorant management plan, which still guides local, state, and federal efforts to hold the invasive species at bay even as funding and tactics have shifted over the past 20 years.

While Stang has been based in Albany since 1990, his focus on Oneida Lake issues has been strong since he was a regional fisheries biologist in DEC Region 7 starting in 1987. He has been promoted several times in his DEC career, including to supervisor of warmwater fisheries and later to chief of the Bureau of Fisheries. In 2007 he took his current role which includes responsibility for all of New York's wildlife and habitat programs. Stang has budget, program, and research authority affecting Oneida Lake, and OLA's recognition of Stang highlighted his efforts to maximize the benefits to Oneida Lake's natural resources and sportsmen.

Stang has collaborated effectively with partners including Cornell University, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, other New York State agencies, and OLA. He has achieved national recognition as a member of the American Fisheries Society and other professional organizations, earning the respect of his colleagues and peers as a leader in the fisheries profession. He holds a bachelor's degree from Virginia Tech and a master's degree from Iowa State,

and he remains the worst enemy of Oneida Lake cormorants.



ANNUAL MEETING SUMMARY

Constantia Hatchery Manager Bill Evans reported that we had a great walleye run this year running Apr 5-14th. Plenty of fish (24,790) were collected and warm temps made females ripen quickly. We (Hatchery and regional DEC employees, not volunteers) had to sort and strip fish ice a day for 4 days in a row to collect eggs before they were dropped in the tanks. We collected 285.3 million eggs and had an 81.5% eye up resulting in plenty of fish for our 2017 stocking program. Oneida Lake's allocation for 2017 was 153,220,000. The Paddlefish program has been suspended. Lake Sturgeon and Round Whitefish programs continue and a couple more species may be added as well.

Cornell Biologic Research Station Director Dr. Randy Jackson outlined key fish population trends. The 2014 walleye class can be disregarded – young were eaten – and the 2015 year class does not appear to have potential to add substantially to the adult population. Time will tell if YOY walleye target gobies over the winter. While some indication that last couple of years that Young-Of-Year perch and Walleye are eating juvenile goby, we yet have no real indication that adults have targeted larger goby over other baitfish, but this would explain the challenging bite. Angler catch rates are driven by the amount of food available, and gizzard shad and buckeyes are abundant. Winter 2016-7 survival #'s may show evidence in summer. Again we can expect ~60,000 walleye available for harvest this year with a Catch-Per-Unit-Effort of about 0.1-0.3/hr.

2010's perch adult numbers are looking "good" (at half the 1961-86 #'s), and we might see a bump in summer bag, as 1/3 of the yellow perch are taken through ice (not this year). The smallmouth numbers continue to trend upwards, but traditional trawls are not getting small smallmouth bass; YOY SMB may have shifted habitat to shoals, in response to juvenile goby as primary food? But we can't trawl shoals and other net-eating obstacles that Dr. Forney learned and taught subsequent crews to avoid – such as shipwrecks!!

An interesting sidebar to note was the report from creel census takers. Last year, upon query of the quest, for the first time bass fishing surpassed walleye anglers.

Doug Stang spoke to several issues of importance, foremost that NYSDEC will be able to take 220 Cormorants this year from Oneida Lake to facilitate the long-term diet study of predation by the bird on walleye and perch. Cornell has established that the cormorant diet shifts in late summer from our valued native sportfish to the non-native gizzard shad. Unknown, because the March 2016 injunction prohibited any cormorant 'take' nationwide, to assess if round gobies have altered the predator-prey relationship in Oneida Lake. Staff will take 10-20 cormorants per week starting in May, and DEC staff started nest counts the last week of April and will continue weekly through mid-August when the counts and harassment efforts will be ramped up to

twice a week. Doug indicated that Policy Issue that was included in the 2017 federal budget included wording that “USFWS is required to expedite the take of double-crested cormorants”.

Doug reported more on the following bullets:

Changes in DFW since 2016 OLA mtg:

- New Division of Fish and Wildlife Director – Tony Wilkinson
- New Bureau of Wildlife Chief – Jim Farquhar
- New Bureau of Habitat Chief – Chuck Nieder
- New Bureau of Fisheries Chief – Steve Hurst

Cormorants – 2016:

- Lost ability to manage cormorants last year (May, 2016) as the public resource depredation order (PRDO) was vacated due to a lawsuit.
- DEC staff conducted counts last year and managed cormorants until mid-May when the PRDO was vacated and took a few cormorants in early May.
- Conducted weekly counts through early October and as experienced in past years, the counts ranged from 50 – 300 through early August and then increased significantly with the fall migrants stopping on Oneida Lake on way south for winter
- No surprise to anyone – counts last fall, without management, were significantly higher (factor of 2) than in the past. Peak count of nearly 1600 in early October
- Over the winter – DEC Commissioner Basil Seggos sent a letter to USFWS seeking swift re-evaluation of the environmental assessment that led to the PRDO

Lake Sturgeon

- Continue work on lake sturgeon restoration in Oneida Lake and throughout New York – draft lake sturgeon recovery / management plan expect to be completed by September 2017.

Federal Budget: EPA GLRI funded at \$300 M (after being reduced to \$10M in President’s proposal) with same process for funds distribution as was in place in 2016 USFWS \$1.75 M for mass marking of trout and salmon to be stocked in the Great Lakes Great Lakes Fisheries Commission \$25 million (including Lake Champlain sea lamprey control) – very slight increase from 2016. Another “Policy Issue” identified in the federal budget requires the Coast Guard to move quickly in approving new ballast water management systems, in conjunction with EPA – should help retard importation of new aquatic invasive species.



FEATURED SPEAKER: CAPTAIN TIM CAZA

“NEW” ON THE BOTTOM!?!

The highlight of the meeting was the first national announcement of a unique archeological find in Oneida Lake. Following our meeting, Captain Tim Caza’s find was covered by over 30 journals across the nation.

Oneida Lake is certainly a wonderful spot for taking pictures. Like many lakeside residents, Tim Caza, from West Monroe, has quite a collection of pictures from the lake—speed boats, cars, tug boats, barges, and even a sailboat under full sail. Although this sounds like a fairly familiar list of subjects, his images are truly remarkable because each of the items appears at the very **bottom** of Oneida Lake, buried beneath her sparkling waves!

Captain Caza, a certified diver and instructor, and his partner developed sophisticated sonar equipment for exploring well below the lake's surface. Using both down-scan and side-scan sonar, he is able to capture images of the lake's bottom in incredible detail. Caza has discovered numerous wrecks on the floor of the lake, each of which he has pinpointed on a map. He hopes to position Oneida Lake as a diver's destination, just as it is for fishermen, boaters, and sailors. At the most recent Annual Meeting of the Oneida Lake Association, Captain Caza mesmerized the audience with a slide show of his underwater images. These are not the fuzzy outlines that appear on a typical fish finder or conventional sonar. The detail in each one of these images makes it possible to instantly recognize the target as a speed boat, a tug boat, and even an upside down car, with its wheels reaching up for the long lost surface.

Most significantly, however, is Caza's recent discovery of the wreck of a Durham boat, nestled in the muddy bottom of Oneida Lake. Durham boats were vessels used in the early days of American canal development. They were long and sleek with pointed bows and flat bottoms. In the early nineteenth century, they were often plied with oars on open waters, and even fitted with a mast and sail for crossing bodies such as Oneida. In shallow waters they were poled by the crew, walking the deck from front to stern. As the Erie Canal began to prosper after 1825, Durham boats were replaced by the mule drawn, blunt-nosed canal boats with which we are familiar.

Caza and his dive partners first discovered their interesting find in 2011. His sonar equipment "caught sight" of an intriguing set of ribs poking up from the lake bed. The size and shape that these ribs suggested caused Caza to believe that it just might be the outline of a Durham boat. Adhering to the constraints of the Abandoned Shipwreck Act, Caza obtained the necessary permits from New York State in order to begin careful excavation of the dive site. Slowly and painstakingly from the bow, middle, and stern areas, he and his crew removed tons of sediment from the wreckage site, taking measurements and dimensions of exposed wood, and ultimately revealing the slender shape of a Durham boat. Their goal was not to salvage the boat or its contents, but, rather, to carefully measure and photograph it for its scientific and archeological value. From prow to stern, it measured 62 feet long, with a ten-foot beam, closely matching the dimensions of a typical Durham boat. These measurements, as well as the revealed structure of the craft, convinced any skeptics that this find was certainly unique for New York State. No previous remains of a Durham boat had ever been discovered in our state.

Following their careful collection of data, Caza followed the terms of the excavation permit and slowly reburied the once-covered portions of the boat, in order to continue to preserve it at the bottom of the lake.

In addition to accurately measuring the boat, and making detailed drawings, Caza also found a few interesting artifacts on board. The items included a teapot, wood barrel remains, and some stone for transport. He was authorized by NYS to retrieve and have preserved a wooden grain scoop, a mallet. Other items were left on the bottom for future archeological study. Wood samples were retrieved, stabilized, and analyzed by SUNY ES&F to confirm how the components were constructed. The boat was recovered with the 4 feet of original silt accumulating since it sank in the early 1800's. The discovery itself is the only true treasure.

OTHER NOTES: Did you know?

- New York State has more than 87,000 miles of rivers and streams, nearly 7,900 lakes and ponds, nearly 600 miles of Great Lakes coastline, over 1,530 square miles of estuaries, 120 miles of Atlantic Ocean coastline, as well as underground aquifers, to protect and conserve.

- Billions of dollars have been spent over the past 30 years on nonpoint source pollution abatement and control projects and more people are aware of how their actions on the land impact our water resources. This has led to significant water quality improvement, but more work remains to be done. The NYSDEC Division of Water invites you to work with us to keep pollutants from nonpoint sources out of our water.

OLA members might be interested in the May newsletter that was published by the Regional Planning Board on behalf of the CNY Stormwater Coalition. Gardens & Gutters May issue <http://www.cnyrpdb.org/stormwater> offers you some tips as you do your lawn work.

VOLUNTEERS ARE NEEDED to lead and participate in the scheduled Friday, July 14 water chestnut weed pull. Two locations will be covered, hopefully by a dozen or so individuals at each site: Poddygut - Big Bay and the east side of Lewis Point. Please contact OLA if you are available to help with a canoe or kayak.

OLA will assist the **North Syracuse School District's 5th grade environmental outing** May 25 at Oneida Shores County Park. We have been asked to give an overview of how the lake and surrounding area was formed and why it is important to maintain the wetlands around Oneida Lake.

BRIDGEPORT DEVELOPMENTS: At a hamlet meeting May 15 Town Supervisor John Becker outlined what he knows of the Oneida Nation's plans for the new "Point Place Casino" and other changes to the Route 31 corridor. The site plan will be posted on the Bridgeport Lakeport Civic Organization's website. Demolition & construction has started. Bottings Hotel will be replaced with a sign, a service entrance will exit onto North Road, and the main (divided) entrance/exit will replace the beauty shop near the VFW. Turning lanes and traffic lights will be added on Route 31, hopefully synchronized for access to and from Route 298. A large stormwater detention pond and landscaping will foster geese around the parking areas to the southwest of the casino. The facility will open in 2018.

Consequent to a 2009 study, the Town's consulting engineer is coordinating with NYSDOT and the Oneida Nation to beautify the corridor between the creek and hardware store. The Bridgeport Streetscape Improvements Project improvements include integrated green infrastructure practices, replacement and extension of sidewalks and delineated driveway improvements along approximately 2,000 linear feet of NYS Route 31 and along North Road. The project includes drainage improvements to mitigate ponding currently occurring in the area and the installation of rain gardens and bio-swales. Also included will be improvements consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act, setbacks, signage, tree planting, lighting, and the overall improvement to this gateway to the Town of Sullivan.

OLA voiced its concern regarding stormwater runoff augmentation from both the casino drainage under North Road and from the Route 31 plan to Mr. Becker. He stated he would register concerns with the Nation, NYSDEC, and NYSDOT. Both developments potentially alter the existing inflow regimes to the valued walleye spawning waters of Chittenango Creek, and could exacerbate contributions of oil, grease, rubber, and other deleterious particulates and chemicals to the Oneida Lake tributary.

Help OLA function. Memorials and contributions to our program are most welcome. OLA is a 501(c)4 organization serving protection of the Oneida Lake environment.

Donate



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

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/>.

Report environmental violations. Please remember to obey all laws, rules, regulations, and codes of ethics as they pertain to boating, fishing, hunting, and management of Oneida Lake and its drainage basin. Be civil. ***1-844-DEC-ECOS(1-844-332-3267)***
