

**Otsego County Water Quality Coordinating Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**967 Co. Hwy. 33, Cooperstown, NY 13326**  
**(607) 547-8337, ext. 4**

Wednesday, April 29, 2009

Present:

Matt Albright, Biological Field Station  
Jill Eichler, Canadarago Lake Improvement Association/OCCA  
Don McKay, Canadarago Lake Improvement Association  
Dr. Ted Peters, Cooperstown Village Water Committee  
Bruce Shultis, Goodyear Lake Association  
Vince Stayter, Goodyear Lake Association  
Tony Capraro, Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Darla Youngs, Otsego County Conservation Association  
Liz Fury, Otsego County Planning Department  
Carl Good, Otsego Lake Association  
Win McIntyre, Otsego Lake Watershed Supervisory Committee  
Joe Homburger, Otsego Land Trust  
Tom Shypski, Village of Richfield Springs

The meeting was called to order a little past 1 p.m. by Matt Albright, serving as facilitator in place of Holly Waterfield, in the Otsego County SWCD conference room.

I. Review of Minutes

Darla Youngs, secretary, suggested that approval of the March 25, 2009 meeting minutes be held until the May meeting, as there was information regarding a Canadarago Lake-related grant that she needed to firm up with Jill Eichler. It was agreed that approval of the March meeting minutes would be put off until the next meeting.

II. Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Blanche Hurlbutt was unable to attend the meeting, as she was tied up with Envirothon business. Blanche had left printed materials, which Tony Capraro brought to the attention of the group. **After brief review, Don McKay moved that the Treasurer's Report be accepted. There was a second by Win McIntyre, after which the Treasurer's Report was approved.**

III. Old Business

1. WQCC Grant Writer RFP

Tom asked whether we had received any inquiries from prospective grant writers in response to the RFP that had been circulated some months previous. Darla said that three interested parties had responded to the RFP that she was aware of, and she had forwarded their contact information to Scott Fickbohm. No point person had been designated for the RFP replies, Darla said, but being that the agreements, payments, etc. would be negotiated through Soil & Water, it made sense to pass the inquiries along to Scott, she explained. The text of the RFP does refer those interested to write WQCC, c/o of Otsego County SWCD, she said. As to the follow-up on the inquiries, Darla could not say.

IV. New Business

1. Snow Removal Educational Materials

As neither Scott nor Holly could attend the April meeting, and Matt pointed out that they were likely to be most intimately involved, it was agreed to roll discussion of this topic over until the next meeting. Matt asked if anyone had insight as to the best timing for a workshop or forum, and Tom replied that we should plan the event for during the summer, any time before Labor Day. It was suggested that a subcommittee be formed and assigned the task of touching base with the towns. Tom said that after Memorial Day would be a better time to contact town officials. Joe inquired about the event program, and possible support from the Association of Town Superintendents of Highways, Inc. Matt said he planned on contacting Mary O'Reilly of NYS DOT, in hopes that the DOT will endorse the undertaking. There was some discussion of the state's use of salt on the highways and the salt strata as a concern.

Matt added that the state probably doesn't have regulatory obligations over the towns that that DOT endorsement might encourage municipalities to participate. Tom suggested that we talk to Keith McCarty, Otsego County representative for Richfield and Springfield. Tom said McCarty has a related background and may be a resource for us as we plan the workshop/forum. Matt asked the group what kind of program we ought to have, and who would organize and facilitate the event. Similar programs had been given in the past, Matt said, and he asked everyone to give some serious thought as to who we might recruit as presenter(s).

There was no other new business.

## V. Department Reports

### 1. Biological Field Station

Matt reported that BFS staff is supposed to be out in two weeks in preparation for the remodeling and that they are getting ready to move. The lab in the new building has already been set up, but there are other rooms not yet completed. He and Holly have been working with the phosphorous removal modules, Matt said, and the units appear to be working so well that he and Holly are worried that they're missing something. The units appear to be working at 95 percent removal, Matt continued, and he and Holly are keeping a close eye on the results in the event that there is something chemical going on that is impacting the results. The phosphorous removal modules are pumping at three speeds, he said, and they are seeing comparable results between the \$2/lb. and \$30/lb. units. The BFS has reinitiated its monitoring of Canadarago and Otsego lakes, Matt continued, and Cobleskill students are in the process of marking spawning walleye as they redo the walleye population estimate.

### 2. Canadarago Lake Improvement Association

Don said that, as of yesterday, Canadarago Lake was 12 inches below flood level. Apparently the cleaning out of Oaks Creek has had a significant effect on the lake. Tom suggested that there is no water coming into the lake from the streams, and that may have something to do with the level of the lake as well. Don said the CLIA has five new Board members, and he reported that there are lots of alewife in the lake. Jill Eichler spoke briefly about the Panther Mountain Dam activity that her BOCES agricultural production and science career and technology education program students will participate in next school year. She said they will be plotting the depth of the water table, conducting a survey of the wetland plants and collecting core samples of the soil profiles, among other data. Matt asked how they will be looking at the water table. Jill responded that the students will use homemade piezometers and water level meters to map the present water table. A description of the activity, provided by Jill, reads: "Mapping the present water table in the vicinity of the dam, conducting a survey of the plants and analyzing the soil will provide valuable information on the present conditions and enable one to predict how changes may impact the environment and the ecosystem in the future."

Jill reminded everyone that the NYSFOLA (New York State Federation of Lake Associations, Inc.) annual conference is this weekend. Matt said that a new edition of NYSFOLA's book, "Diet for a Small Lake," is now available and can be ordered through the NYSFOLA website, [www.nysfola.org](http://www.nysfola.org). The book is very informative, Matt said, and a great reference material.

### 3. Cooperstown Village Water Board

Ted reported that the Village had received an estimate on how much it will cost to run chlorine out to the intake to suppress zebra mussels, and it is a lot higher than they were hoping. He said the Village has not yet decided upon the best spot for this. Ted also said the Village Board of Sewer Commissioners is currently working on a grant application for green stimulus funds to use the wetlands by the sewer plant to polish effluent. If the Village does not receive the grant, Ted continued, they will hold off to see if removal of nitrogen is required. If this is not the case, and funding is not received, the Village will probably not use the wetlands, Ted said.

### 4. Cornell Cooperative Extension

Not present to report.

### 5. Goodyear Lake Association

Vince said the GLA is working on a lake management plan. Jill Eichler, who has been instrumental in CLIA's lake management plan development, is set to speak to the GLA Board on May 19, he said, regarding a proposal to establish a baseline study/lake management plan for Goodyear Lake similar to the one she did for Canadarago. The

GLA, at its last meeting, tentatively committed to some funding for this project, Vince said, and will decide after they hear from Jill what further monetary steps to take. Vince said he has contacted Dave Pysnik of Sidney High School to see if he would commit some of his students to this project, but there has been no word as yet. In the past, Pysnik's students have worked on various ecological projects during the summer, including flood control on the Susquehanna.

#### 6. Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

Tony said NRCS is currently taking applications for its programs, but that the deadlines are nearing. As of Friday, the acceptance period for applications for EQIP, WHIP and AMA ends, he said, and the EQIP forestry application period ends May 15. There was a two-week sign-up period for stimulus money, Tony continued, with \$145 million available for flood plain easements. NRCS put in three applications for 130 acres, one of which was chosen to be completed, he announced. Tony said it has been quite hectic, with the application period ending Friday. The tree program has also ended, he said. NRCS has been busy selling raffle tickets for the Envirothon, Tony said. Among the prizes are a kayak and gift certificates, he said, with all proceeds going to benefit the Envirothon. Two classes of BOCES kids came to help with the tree sale, Tony said, which saved the district a ton of time. The kids and staff enjoyed a nice cookout after.

#### 7. New York Center for Agricultural Medicine and Health (NYCAMH)

Not present to report.

#### 8. NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC)

Not present to report.

#### 9. NYS Department of Health (DOH)

Not present to report.

#### 10. Otsego County Conservation Association

Darla reported that OCCA had recently been very busy with two events, both of which are now concluded. The first was Earth Festival, held on Saturday, April 18 at Milford Central School and the second was the annual OCCA Garage Sale, held the previous weekend, Saturday and Sunday, April 25 and 26. Darla said she felt this was the best attended of the three Earth Festivals she has participated in, judging from the steady stream of visitors to the OCCA tables. Darla commented that they had given out a lot of literature, including materials on invasive species control and recognition. OCCA had traded brochures with NYS DEC, she said, and those were very popular. The Garage Sale was also a success, she added, bringing in just under \$5,000. OCCA is gearing up for its 2009 Annual Fund initiative, Darla said.

#### 11. Otsego County Planning Department

Intern Liz Fury spoke on behalf of the Planning Department. Liz said the recent training sessions hosted by the county went very well. There were about 50 people at each of the three sessions, she added. Liz announced that this year's Household Hazardous Waste Day collection has been scheduled for September 18 and 19. This year's event will include a medication collection component, which Liz is working to coordinate with county senior planner Karen Sullivan. Liz said she would be forwarding a letter to the WQCC asking for monetary support of the medication collection. DEC reimburses the county for HHWD expenses, but the medication collection is not included in this reimbursement, she said. Matt said the medication collection is a great program and we ought to endorse it fully. He said with our small bank balance and lack of incoming funds he is not sure how much we could contribute. Liz said the full cost of the medication collection is estimated at \$1,200. Matt encouraged everyone to consider the request and said we should plan to put the matter to vote next month.

#### 12. Otsego County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD)

Not present to report.

#### 13. Otsego Lake Association

Carl Good reported that OLA had also taken part in the recent Earth Festival. It was his first experience with the event, he said. Carl announced that OLA's annual member meeting will be held the third Saturday in June. Carl said there is now a zebra mussel filtration unit, the "Shredder," available for purchase at Bruce Hall. He was asked how the filter works and replied that it is installed in the intake valve for seasonal use. The filter cartridges are then

recycled and replaced. Darla said that OCCA had recently interviewed Bruce Hall representatives, and the owner of the company that makes the Shredder, for a press release that will notify area residents of the availability of this product, which retails at \$399, she said. Carl said Suzanne Kingsley is currently having the filtration unit installed at her property. Matt mentioned Chuck O'Neil, with New York Sea Grant, who has spoken at previous lake forums on the topic of zebra mussel control. Darla said she has been corresponding with O'Neil, who directed her to information about zebra mussels and residential control, links to which are now posted on the OCCA website, [www.occainfo.org](http://www.occainfo.org). O'Neil has offered to work with OCCA to set up a workshop for homeowners on the topic of control, Darla said. There was further discussion about copper screening and whether or not the zebra mussel veligers can be effectively filtered. Darla said OCCA is not endorsing the Shredder – that O'Neil, speaking from personal experience, had advised against endorsement of products – rather OCCA is working to let homeowners know what is available locally. Anderson's Hardware in Richfield Springs was mentioned as a possible outlet for zebra mussel control products, and Tom pointed out that the store has recently changed hands.

#### 14. Otsego Lake Watershed Supervisory Committee (WSC)

Win said it has been a good spring for construction of sewer systems – there are a number already in, he said, and a number planned. The WSC will be kicking off its fifth year of a five-year inspection program in May, Win said. Village of Cooperstown employees are being trained to assume the inspection process by the Onsite Training Network, and Win is working with them this year. There about 50 systems to inspect, he said, including three large common systems. There are still some unresponsive property owners, Win added, and those that don't respond are assumed to be in failure. There is a penalty process in place, he said.

Regarding other threats to the watershed, Win said the Springfield Planning Board has still had no further word from MSG regarding its proposed music festival. The last meeting on this proposed development was a commenting session on the draft scoping document. Since then there has been nothing, Win said. He said the MSG proposal is diminishing in terms of being a problem for 2010. The bigger threat, Win continued, is the potential for natural gas drilling in the watershed, which is a huge issue. The DEC is simply not addressing this concern with only a 50-foot setback from open water sources, he said. Win explained that the WSC operates under New York State public health law. The WSC works closely with the Department of Health, which is relative more progressive than DEC, he said. WSC representatives met recently with Audrey Lewis of the NYS DOH Oneonta District Office, Win said, to get acquainted and to open up discussion regarding natural gas drilling as a public health concern. He said they were underwhelmed by the response, and that the DOH is very quiet on the subject of gas drilling overall. The question, Win said, is whether or not public health law supersedes environmental protection law when it comes to drinking water. The WSC has drafted proposals, Win continued, but following the meeting with Audrey Lewis they decided instead to send a letter suggesting that public health law ought to be amended.

Win talked further about the state source water assessment program mandated by Congress in the late 90s, resulting from amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act. DOH was mandated to do this for New York State, he said, and drawing on existing data an Otsego Lake source water assessment report was released in 2003. The report was pretty comprehensive, he said. The next step, source water protection plans, never happened. Tom said 9/11 changed the focus of everything, including threats to water. Attention was diverted from the source water protection plans and never came back to it. Win said there could be more than 100 gas wells in the watershed. The WSC has recommended that source water reassessments be conducted. In regard to natural gas drilling, among the recommendations being made by the WSC are: setbacks of one mile for open source water supplies (lakes/reservoirs); two levels of buffers for streams leading into open source water supplies – ¼ mile, no gas drilling, and between ¼ mile to 1 mile, drilling so long as certain conditions are met; closed loop system with no open pits; water sampling prior to drilling and after; downstream water supplies to be notified of any drilling in advance. It is the WSC's intention that the GEIS would not apply, rather gas drilling would be subject to site-specific State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR). A letter with these suggestions was sent to DOH two weeks ago, Win said. They haven't heard anything as yet. Joe Homburger asked if these comments were going to be sent to the DEC as well, and Win said they will be. Joe said if the roles of DEC and DOH were to be clearly defined that would be a landmark accomplishment, and a good contribution. He said the WSC is to be commended for its efforts toward that end.

Further discussion of natural gas drilling included: consideration of the landowner aspect and potential lawsuits and liability; the chemical substances used and control over such; what ultimately happens to the waste water (Win: it is industrial waste containing heavy metals, a range of hydrocarbons and brine, and has to be treated at permitted

industrial treatment facilities.); the fact that the state does not have the capacity to handle the amount of industrial waste in question.

15. Otsego Land Trust

Joe reported that the OLT had recently hired Connie Tedesco as its operations coordinator. He said to look for notices in the "Field, Forest & Fen" newsletter for hikes, as scheduling is currently in progress. Joe said there has been strong interest in conservation easements and good collaboration with the county and other area agencies. The Land Trust has a full docket of about 26 interested parties/prospects for easements and business is good, he concluded.

16. Otsego 2000

Not present to report.

17. Other

Vince asked if Robert Boyle might be allowed to sit in on a future meeting. It was agreed this would be fine, but Ted reminded those present that visitors are invited to sit in but not to voice any input until the conclusion of the departmental reports. Win asked Vince to brief Mr. Boyle in regard to that stipulation. Joe had several questions regarding the bylaws, including the composition of the Bylaws Committee, whether we want to list member groups in the bylaws and, if so, if those ought to be updated. As the Otsego Land Trust is not currently listed as a member group, Matt moved that the OLT be recognized as a formal WQCC member. There was a second, and the motion was approved. Another question regarding the bylaws was whether voting should be restricted to one representative per member agency. It was agreed that at the next meeting we would appoint a Bylaws Committee to review the document.

**The meeting was adjourned at 2:20 p.m.** The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 27 at the BFS Upland Interpretive Center on Lake Road.