

*NEWS FROM THE
OATKA CREEK
WATERSHED
COMMITTEE
WINTER 2001*



**WATERSHED MANAGEMENT
PLAN PROCESS UNDERWAY**

Thousands of people across nineteen towns and villages in Wyoming, Genesee, Livingston, and Monroe Counties share a common address: The Oatka Creek Watershed.

The time is now to make certain this crucial common resource is protected. A healthy Oatka Creek is a pre-requisite to our collective quality of life. A preserved creek means clean water for drinking, swimming, and fishing. Sound land use policies and practices employed to preserve water quality can increase tourism, and attract the kind of residential and commercial investment that harmonizes with goals for our economies, environments, and rural community character. Across political borders we influence each other, and must work and plan in concert to ensure a win-win situation for all our communities.

The Oatka Creek Watershed Committee is working to bring people from all walks of life within the communities of the Oatka Creek basin together to create and implement an inter-municipal **Watershed Management Plan**. Such a plan is designed to guide decisions and actions so that an environmentally and economically healthy watershed benefits all. This Plan will be authored and ultimately adopted by all the municipalities that comprise the basin, and will be used to inform and guide future land use, economic development, and

other decisions and actions basin-wide on issues such as storm water management, highway maintenance, and the problems and potentials of agriculture. This Plan will not be only *for* the municipalities but *by* the municipalities, their citizens and officials.

The Oatka Creek Watershed Committee is meeting with municipalities to introduce the Committee and solicit participation in the watershed management plan process. It is important that this plan be an inclusive, basin-wide effort, with the variety of stakeholders and interests represented. We urge your assistance in arranging a presentation in your community (town/village board meetings, or other community meetings or gatherings).

Our goal is to have representatives from all the municipalities within the watershed involved in the watershed management plan process. Please call OCWC Chair Jack Bradbury regarding a community presentation, to register your interest in participating in the watershed management plan process, and with any other questions, at 768-4908 (email jboatka@hfent.com).

GET INVOLVED

If you'd like to join in the work of the Oatka Creek Watershed Committee, or make a donation to assist the Committee, please call Committee Chair Jack Bradbury at 716-768-4908 or email jboatka@hfent.com

OCWC LAUNCHES OUTREACH INITIATIVE

Volunteer members of the Oatka Creek Watershed Committee have launched an effort to reach out to the local elected officials of the fifteen towns, four villages, and four counties that comprise the Oatka Creek basin. The presentation to the municipalities includes a fifteen-minute slide show, discussion with attendees on the Creek, and on efforts to develop and implement a Watershed Management Plan. These presentations offer the committee representatives and the attendees opportunity to both learn and share—a key goal of this outreach is to enlist the help of local officials in identifying water quality concerns.

To date, four presentations have been made: to the Towns of Bethany and Wheatland, to the Village of LeRoy, and to the Genesee County Water Quality Coordinating Committee. We'd like to bring our "road show" to your community too! To schedule a presentation, and/or to learn more about the Oatka Creek Watershed Committee, contact Committee Chair Jack Bradbury.

BE A "HIT!" VISIT THE COMMITTEE'S CYBER-HOME at www.oatka.org

Visit this site often to see it grow, as well as to get valuable and important information about your creek and the work of the Committee. The site links you to the STATE OF THE BASIN REPORT, a comprehensive look at the watershed.

*When You Drink the Water,
Remember the Spring. ~Chinese Proverb*

THE WATERBODY INVENTORY & PRIORITY

WATERBODIES LIST by Matt Gillette

New York Department of Environmental Conservation
Division 8, Avon

In order to fulfill certain requirements of the Federal Clean Water Act, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) must provide periodic assessment of the quality of the water resources in the state. These assessments reflect monitoring and water quality information drawn from a number of programs and sources, both within and outside the DEC. This information has been compiled by the DEC into an inventory database of waterbodies in New York State that compiles information regarding known and/or suspected water quality problems and issues, and tracks progress towards their resolution. This inventory of water quality information is the basis for the DEC's Priority Waterbodies List (PWL).

The Priority Waterbodies List serves as a base resource for Division of Water (Division) program management. The PWL provides:

Baseline Assessments of Water Quality.

Periodic assessments evaluate whether the waters of the state support their designated uses. Such assessments are both general (cumulative statewide evaluation of all waters) and specific (evaluation of specific waterbodies) in nature.

A Focus for Division Program Activities.

Because of limited resources, various Division programs address those specific water quality issues—both statewide problems (e.g. storm water, toxic/contaminated sediment) and site/waterbody-specific concerns—where needs are greatest and efforts will have greatest impact.

A Consistent and Objective Inventory. The PWL evaluation of water quality problems and issues is used to develop accurate priority ranking/scoring systems that inform funding and program decisions.

A Record of Water Quality History.

The PWL provides information for specific waterbodies so that DEC divisions can easily respond to questions—from both inside and outside the division (including the public)—concerning what is known about the water quality of specific rivers, lakes, and watersheds.

A Measure of Progress. The PWL tracks the progress of Division programs and efforts towards improving water resources of the state.

Comprehensive Assessment Strategy.

The Priority Waterbodies List is a key component of the Division of Water's larger Comprehensive Assessment Strategy. This strategy is designed to integrate a variety of division activities into a more coordinated and comprehensive water quality program. The specific goals of the Comprehensive Assessment Strategy are to provide:

- Complete and thorough evaluation of all available monitoring data
- Comprehensive assessment of the quality of all waters in the state
- Coordinated approach to improving and protecting these water resources

The Comprehensive Assessment Strategy relies on a rotating drainage basin approach. This approach focuses water quality monitoring and assessment activities on a portion of the state for a period of time, and then turns attention to other parts of the state. The New York State strategy enables multiple programs to conduct coordinated monitoring and assessment efforts—culminating in an update of PWL information—in two or three targeted basins (about 20% of the state) each year. This schedule allows for a comprehensive re-assessment of the entire state every five years.

NOTE: 2001 is the year for the review of the Genesee River Basin, which includes the Oatka Creek sub-watershed. Materials are available to various agencies and interests within the Upper and Lower Genesee Basins that will allow them to provide water quality information to the DEC. This information will be used by the DEC to update the existing Priority Water Bodies List. This update will allow the DEC to re-focus funding and efforts to those areas within the Genesee Basin that are shown to be priorities for water quality restoration and protection. If you have any information you feel the DEC should be aware of regarding the Oatka Creek basin, please contact the Oatka Creek Watershed Committee. The update will be in progress throughout 2001.

OATKA CREEK WATERSHED QUIZ!

Answers on Page 4

1. What is a watershed anyway?
2. The Oatka Creek Watershed includes parts of what four western New York counties?
3. Where are the headwaters of Oatka Creek located?
4. Into what waterway does Oatka Creek empty?
5. How long is Oatka Creek?
6. What is the area of the Oatka Creek watershed in square miles?
7. What is the primary land use in the Oatka Creek Watershed?
8. Of what larger watershed is the Oatka Creek Watershed a part?

CHAIR'S MESSAGE by Jack Bradbury

The start of a new year offers a good opportunity to take a look at our lives and refocus on those things that are important to us; perhaps even re-think some of the things we often take for granted or overlook.

I for one have enjoyed Oatka Creek for over 60 years and always figured it would retain its beautiful and pristine character for all time. Such is not life. Times change and it is important to protect the things we hold dear and value most.

The Oatka, in one form or another, touches many of our lives every day. For those of you who live along the Creek, it may be looking out your kitchen or living room window at a lovely view, or hearing its soothing sound. Perhaps it's a refreshing glimpse of the Creek as you drive to and from work or the store. You may be touched through trout fishing or canoeing in the springtime, summer, or fall. And maybe you have visions of creating greenways, or networks of public and private space along Oatka Creek for recreation, buffering, habitat protection, flood prevention.

My request to you today: think about those things you value most about the Oatka Creek and its watershed. And please let this Committee know your concerns and areas or issues you may see as critical to the health of the Creek. We need your help to keep the Oatka flowing on in its beautiful and pristine way. Call or e-mail us soon. Thank you.

Watershed Quiz Answers:

1. A watershed is an area of land that catches rain & snow, which drains into a marsh, stream, river, or ground water.
2. Wyoming, Genesee, Livingston, Monroe.
3. Town of Warsaw, Wyoming County.
4. The Genesee River (and, ultimately, Lake Ontario.)
5. 58 miles.
6. 215 square miles.
7. Agriculture.
8. The Genesee River Watershed, and the Lake Ontario Basin.

This is a "Tree Free" Newsletter! It is printed on paper that is 50% recycled (post-consumer), and 50% sugar cane.

OATKA CREEK PARK A MONROE COUNTY TREASURE by Louis Amico, Monroe County Parks

Oatka Creek Park was established by Monroe County in the late 1960s following controversy generated by vocal opponents who believed that its acquisition was too costly and the land too wild, with spring floods and insect infestation, to be of any use as a public park. Fortunately, the naysayers lost out in their quest to prevent its creation. With its abundance of great towering trees, gorgeous meadows, walking trails, and the presence of Oatka Creek--an outstanding trout stream (actively maintained and stocked by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation)--this 461-acre park has become a precious recreational resource to citizens of Monroe and neighboring counties.

Today, Oatka Creek Park is maintained primarily as a "passive park". It has been kept wild, and is a pristine place for hiking, cross-country skiing, and of course, excellent trout fishing. (Artificial lures only please – no live bait! As of this year, the park area is under "catch and release" restriction. See current fishing regulations guide.)

Preliminary studies are underway right now which will contribute to the development of a master plan for the park. These studies include a report on vegetation and wildlife, and a geologic study with mapping, necessitated by past gypsum mining that occurred on the land.

The master plan will look at a variety of issues regarding the park's future, including the question of what uses will be permitted and supported. An advisory committee will be formed in the near future, with public meetings beginning in a few months. Interested in this process? Call 256-4952 for more information.

Oatka Creek Park is located in the Town of Wheatland, south of Route 383 (Scottsville Road), west of Union Street (County Road 170). Enter the park from Union Street at the fishing access road north of the creek, or at the parking area opposite Quaker Road.