

Oatka Creek Watershed Committee, Inc.

P.O. Box 181

Scottsville, New York 14546

NEWS FROM THE

OATKA CREEK

WATERSHED COMMITTEE

SPRING 2002

Message from the Chairman

Rick VenVertloh

As the incoming chairman of the Oatka Creek Watershed Committee (OCWC), I want to take this opportunity to introduce myself. I have been a resident of the Village of Scottsville for eighteen years. Had it not been for a few early fly-fishing excursions to Oatka Creek Park (I grew up in Irondequoit), things could be quite different today! Needless to say, my family and I have spent countless hours on the creek during all seasons of the year. The Oatka Creek is a tremendous resource in our community.

As Chairman, one of my first priorities will be to promote our community outreach efforts. Last year we visited each of the communities within the watershed. This was a rewarding effort that we hope will lead to greater community participation in the planning process. A similar model has worked well in the Finger Lakes where participation by local stakeholders helped develop a watershed plan that is both relevant and supportable. Therefore, as we move forward, I hope we can continue to build a working relationship with communities within the watershed.

Of course, we will be continuing with our other



activities as well: education, scientific research, document development, etc., etc. To continue this work, we must rely on "grass root" volunteers to help us along.

We welcome any support you can give and encourage any interested parties to give us a call or attend our regular meetings. We generally meet on the 3rd Wednesday of every month at noon in the Leroy Village Hall. Please call me at (585) 295-6226 (w) to confirm specific dates. Hope to see you there!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Richard T. VenVertloh".

Richard T. VenVertloh
Chairman, Oatka Creek Watershed Committee



Outreach Program – Phase I Completed

By Jack Bradbury

Phase I of the Outreach Program was recently completed and a report of the Program will soon be available on the Oatka Creek Watershed Committee Web Site (www.oatka.org).

Municipal officials from fifteen towns, five villages and two other government committees within the watershed were contacted in a series of meetings between October 2000 and June 2001. The purpose of the meetings was to introduce the work and objective of the Committee, answer questions, receive comments and identify, through a water quality survey, the concerns and critical issues of each municipality.

The report summarizes feedback received from municipal officials and results from the mail-in survey. Concerns identified at the meetings included septic systems, stream bank erosion, silt accumulation, flooding, manure runoff, and discharge from industries into the creek. Results from the survey indicated that respondents felt water quality was good and that the Oatka Creek is important or very important to their community. Most of the respondents indicated that the Watershed Management Plan was important or very important for the Oatka Creek and that their municipality should be involved at some level in developing the plan. Copies of the report will be made available to the public following reviews by participating municipalities. *Pay us a visit at www.oatka.org.*

Researching the History of Oatka Creek

Bob Kelley, Oatka Creek Watershed Committee

To some it's an ever-present stream offering recreational opportunities to swim, splash, canoe, fish, and hike along; to others it's a resource for irrigation, power, drainage, and property demarcation.

It is the Oatka Creek, a watershed creek draining parts of Wyoming, Genesee, Livingston, and Monroe counties to the north-flowing Genesee River. In the "Oatka Creek Watershed Guide", now in preparation, we want to share the historical and present story of the Oatka Creek via maps, photos and narrative.

Our intent is to make the published Guide an available resource to municipalities, public officials, property-owners along the Creek, and to the general public who find pleasure and enjoyment near it, on it, and in it. ▲

What's New at the OCWC?

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People often say, "Change is inevitable." Such is the case at the Oatka Creek Watershed Committee. We are proud to announce that we have reorganized as a non-profit corporation and are applying for tax-exempt 501(c)(3) status with the IRS. This is exciting news with several notable benefits: greater access to grants, tax deductions for donors, tax-free use of funds and credibility as a serious organization. As part of this reorganization, we have elected a Board of Directors and officers in accordance with our bylaws. Should you wish to contact us, our new address is:

Oatka Creek Watershed Committee, Inc.
P.O. Box 181
Scottsville, New York 14546

Should you wish to talk to one of our members, feel free to call:

Mr. Richard T. VenVertloh, Chairman
Oatka Creek Watershed Committee
Telephone: (H) 889-5293
(W) 295-6226
E-mail: rvenvertloh@labellapc.com

Wild Brown Trout in Oatka Creek

Dave Reckahn, Wyoming Co. SWCD

There are approximately nine miles of Oatka Creek upstream of the Route 19 bridge in the village of Warsaw. Additionally, there are 22 tributaries to Oatka Creek in this section. Oatka Creek in Wyoming County has historically been stocked by the NYS DEC with brown trout. A four-mile section from the Route 19 bridge in the village upstream to the impassable falls downstream of Rock Glen is stocked annually with 1850 yearling brown trout.

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Brown Trout, cont'd.



Oatka Creek also contains some wild brown trout. These are trout that are naturally produced in the stream and its tributaries.

Oatka Creek (from just upstream of the village to the headwaters) averages 22 pounds per acre of wild brown trout or about 300 adult brown trout per mile of stream. The largest wild brown trout collected during a 2001 summer electrofishing survey was 17 inches. The uppermost 5 miles of Oatka Creek (also called Cotton Creek for the last 3 miles) is not stocked at all but maintains a wild brown trout population.

Virtually all the wild brown trout in Oatka Creek come from natural spawning that takes place in a number of tributaries. In 2001, five Oatka Creek tributaries were also surveyed by electrofishing. Each had fingerling trout about three inches long, meaning their eggs were deposited in October-November of 2000 and hatching took place in the spring of 2001. Cumulatively in all five tributaries, these young-of-year brown trout average about 1000 fish per mile of water or about 20 fish for each 100 feet of stream.

Other Oatka Creek tributaries are scheduled to be surveyed in future years and it is likely that some of them will also show evidence of wild trout, either through the collection of adults or young-of-year fish.

Thank You, Jack Bradbury!

By Rick VenVertloh, Chairman

As many of you know, Jack Bradbury has been serving as chairman of the Oatka Creek Watershed Committee (OCWC) for the last several years. This is a demanding job in a volunteer organization such as the OCWC. Jack recently expressed a desire to let someone else take a turn at chairmanship. As such, the committee has elected Rick VenVertloh as chairman and Jack Bradbury as vice chairman. Jack still intends to be actively involved with the activities of the committee.

It is important to note the leadership that Jack brought to the OCWC during his tenure as chairman. His dedication and hard work have helped to establish the committee as an important entity in our community. His vision of working with municipalities to protect this unique and valuable water resource is now ingrained in our philosophy. A planning process such as this can often take a long time and we are well underway thanks to Jack and many others. ▲

Work Plan 2002

Toward the end of calendar year 2001, the Oatka Creek Watershed Committee held a Saturday workshop meeting to prioritize the goals and objectives for the upcoming year. We also reaffirmed our "mission statement" as well as the general framework for the planning process we are promoting. The planning process is broken down into three stages:

Stage I Existing Conditions, Needs & Objectives
Stage II Develop the Watershed Management Plan
Stage III Implementation and Monitoring

Within each stage, there is an OUTREACH program and a WATERSHED PLAN development initiative. The outreach program goals include: building education, community participation, and stewardship. The watershed plan development initiative involves writing a report, supported by scientific analysis, that communities can use as a guide to preserve water quality. We estimate that we are currently about 65% complete with Stage I.

Some of our specific goals for 2002 are:

1. Publish completed research documents: "Outreach Program: A Report on Phase I"; "State of the Basin Report"; "Trace Metals Report"
2. Conduct public meeting(s); meetings with county legislators and municipalities
3. Publish Oatka Creek Guide (an informative map of the watershed)
4. Identify and commission scientific research projects (ex. stress steam analysis)
5. Newsletter publication
6. OCWC booth at local festivals
7. Grant writing
8. Identify and develop educational programs

Please contact Rick VenVertloh with any ideas that may help the OCWC meet these goals.

The mission of the Committee is to preserve the pristine character and water quality now present in Oatka Creek for future generations.

Common Good Planning Center Working on Smart Land Use for Water Quality

While the Oatka Creek Watershed Committee is focused on preserving the water quality of Oatka Creek, it is also concerned about land use, for a watershed is an area of land that drains into a body of water. It is what we do on this land that makes or breaks water quality.

In our region, we have a land use problem that compromises not only our environmental health but also our economic, social, and aesthetic health. The problem is sprawl, or the inefficient use of land for development. Many don't see sprawl as a problem in our region, especially in our rural areas ("There's still a lot of open land out there.") But we arguably have a worse, more inefficient situation here than in 'sprawl capitals' like the Atlanta and Washington, D.C. areas—because we have sprawl without population growth. **In this region, we are developing land at about fourteen times the rate of population growth. Fourteen times. This has serious ramifications for taxpayers and water users—and that's all of us.**

The Common Good Planning Center, a program of Rochester Area Community Foundation, has been working since 1998 to interest, educate, and involve citizens and organizations in the community planning process. The Center works towards land use and development that improves rather than compromises economy, ecology, and equity in all our urban, suburban, and rural communities. The Center believes that citizen participation and inter-municipal/regional cooperation in land use and economic development planning are the keys to improving quality of life in this region.

And this includes improving the quality of Oatka Creek. Inefficient land use in the Oatka Creek Watershed—in the form of residential, commercial, or industrial development—threatens water quality. Forceful and contaminated runoff from developments and construction sites, pollutants and litter from parking lots and roads, excess nutrients from agricultural operations, and pesticides and herbicides from lawns all contribute to sedimentation, soil erosion, and pollution in the creek and its tributaries.

The future of Oatka Creek depends largely on the land use plans and activities of all the municipalities that make up the watershed. Check out your community's plans and zoning. Chances are that changes can be made to improve the design of land, structures, and policies for better water quality. And since the Oatka Creek Watershed traverses political boundaries, it is imperative that the municipalities within the watershed work together to safeguard the quality of this precious resource.

For more information about the Common Good Planning Center and its programs/resources for better land use planning in the Genesee Finger Lakes Region, call 585-442-2730 or visit the Center on the web at www.ggw.org/commongood.

You're Invited!!

To the next meeting of the
Oatka Creek Watershed Committee
12:00 PM on Wednesday, May 22nd
LeRoy Village Hall, upstairs.
*To request handicap access contact
Rick Ven Vertloh at 295-6226 before May 22nd.*

What types of grant funding may be available for Watershed Committees?

- Non-point source non-ag pollution abatement and control
- Non-point source ag pollution abatement and control
- Education
- Demonstration
- Scientific studies
- And more!



