



## NEWSLETTER

Summer 2009

Oatka Creek Watershed Committee, Inc.

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*WWW.OATKA.ORG*

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### Message From the Chairman

Richard VenVertloh

**GREAT NEWS TO REPORT – THE DEVELOPMENT OF A WATERSHED PLAN FOR OATKA CREEK IS ABOUT TO BEGIN!** The upcoming planning process will be led by Genesee/Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council (G/FLRPC) in association with multiple stakeholders and partners and will culminate in the development of a watershed management plan document. The OCWC is excited about working with the G/FLRPC and other stakeholders such as yourself throughout the upcoming year. Please take the time to read the following article entitled, “Oatka Creek Watershed Plan Commences” which will acquaint you with some of the details of the scope of work. My greatest hope is that we can partner with each municipality in a collaborative way such that the final product reflects the specific needs of your community.

Over the years the OCWC has built a solid foundation of reports and studies from which to build on. Some examples include: State of the Basin Report, Stressed Stream Analysis, Oatka Guide and Geochemistry of Oatka Creek. Each document serves to define the character of the watershed basin and will be used as a starting point in the planning process. As always, the Oatka Creek Watershed Committee (OCWC) is focused on preserving and protecting water quality and we are confident the watershed plan, once completed, will be an excellent “roadmap” to achieve these goals.

Lastly, we appreciate your support and look forward to working with you to preserve our creek. Thank you !

*Rick*

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### Oatka Creek Watershed Management Plan Commences

Brian Slack AICP, Senior Planner – Genesee/Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council

The watershed management planning process for the Black and Oatka Creek Watersheds is moving forward. The project contractor/sponsor is the Town of Wheatland. Genesee/Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council (G/FLRPC) will act as the project manager, working to organize and facilitate

meetings and providing planning and technical assistance. Project partners include the Oatka Creek Watershed Committee and the Black Creek Watershed Coalition.

### **What is Watershed Planning?**

The watershed approach is a flexible framework for managing water resource quality and quantity within a specific geographic area. Successful watershed approaches include a deliberate effort to involve local stakeholders in the process, as well as management actions that are supported by sound science and appropriate technology. Watershed planning is, indeed, a *process*, one that uses a series of cooperative, iterative steps to characterize *existing conditions*, identify and *prioritize problems*, define *management objectives*, develop *protection or remediation strategies*, and implement and *adopt selected actions* as necessary. The outcomes of this process will include not only referenced reports, data, and other materials, but will also include increased awareness among local residents regarding the status and associated trends of local water resource conditions. Further, concerned citizens and local officials will be given a framework that will help to organize and facilitate problem solving and decision making well into the future.

Working in association with the project advisory committees, separate and unique watershed plans and other related documents will be produced for each watershed. The project is being sponsored by the New York State Department of State Division of Coastal Resources with funds under Title 11 of the Environmental Protection Fund. Additional funding includes a grant from the Rochester Area Community Foundation.

The project will progress in separate, iterative stages. The first major step is to create watershed “characterization” reports for each watershed. These reports are comprehensive assessments of the past and existing conditions of the watershed. They typically contain detailed inventories of water quality and land use conditions, socio-economic and demographic conditions, and natural resources. The characterization will also begin to address any gaps that exist with regard to scientific information on subjects such as water quality and pollution sources. The public will be asked to provide input at key stages during the compilation of the characterization reports.

The next primary step of the project will be to use the information gathered in the characterization process to evaluate and rank problems and risks by geographic area across each watershed. Other steps of the project include evaluating the ‘regulating and programmatic environment.’ This is an essential step in determining the roles and responsibilities of various entities as the process works toward identifying problem solving strategies. After this is accomplished, clear and comprehensive management strategies for watershed protection and restoration can be developed.

Together, each of the steps outlined above (in conjunction with other important benchmarks and tasks) will comprise a complete watershed management plan.

### **Why Are We Developing a Watershed Plan?**

Watershed plans can be initiated for various reasons, depending on local needs and the priorities of those propelling the effort. Assessment of local resources is one of the primary motives of this process – determining to the greatest extent possible what the present condition of the resources are and what actions need to be taken. Once baseline data is generated and compiled, local advocates and municipalities can create effective strategies for stabilizing and mitigating identified problems and maintaining or enhancing those areas in the watershed which remain relatively intact or stable. Approved and adopted watershed management plans generally lead to implementation, protection and

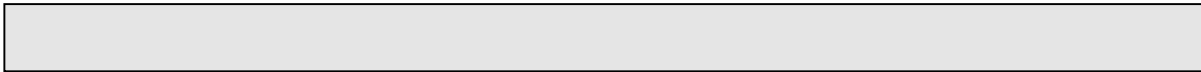
enhancement of these important resources. All efforts made locally will also have the added benefit of supporting other regional, state and national programs or initiatives, either directly or indirectly. Examples of such programs include the Rochester Embayment Remedial Action Plan, the Lake Ontario Management Plan, and New York State's ecosystem-based management initiative, to name only a few.

### **Project Advisory Committees**

G/FLRPC is working with project partners including the Oatka Creek Watershed Committee to assemble two separate Project Advisory Committees and reach out to municipalities for their support and involvement. The role of the Project Advisory Committee will be to identify additional stakeholders, assist with project development, review and provide input on draft materials, and monitor overall project progress.

### **Putting the Process to Work**

The success of a watershed planning effort depends on those who become involved. While the project team will be working diligently to create an open and effective watershed planning process as well as informative and comprehensive project materials, local citizens and municipalities can infuse the project with energy, ideas and action. The public will be provided with opportunities to participate in the watershed planning process, to learn about their local environment, and to offer their knowledge and insights regarding local environmental conditions, concerns and potential solutions.



### **Proposed Cleanup at Lapp Insulator, Inc.**

Jill Babinski, Genesee County Planning Department

Since the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Lapp Insulator, Inc. has been manufacturing and producing ceramic insulators and electrical transformer bushing in LeRoy New York, a town located in Genesee County. Situated in close proximity to the Oatka Creek, historical records indicate that during its operation, Lapp Insulator, Inc. has stored or utilized oils and petroleum based products, along with chlorinated solvents (known as volatile organic compounds or VOCs) including 1,1,1-trichloroethane (TCA), trichloroethene (TCE) and tetrachloroethene (PCE), that have subsequently been released into the site soils and groundwater.

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) conducted a site investigation on the majority of the site, collecting soil, groundwater, surface water, soil gas and sediment samples. From these samples, it was determined that the area, including the Oatka Creek, was not contaminated at levels of concern.

Although the contaminant concentrations present in near surface soil at the site do not pose a public health concern, to prevent future exposure, the NYSDEC has proposed a remedy that includes;

- A remedial design program to provide the details necessary for the construction, operation, maintenance and monitoring of the remedy;

- Installation of an in-situ chemical oxidation system to address shallow groundwater contamination;
- Excavation of contaminated soil;
- Installation of soil and/or asphalt covers and maintenance of current soil/asphalt covers;
- A groundwater monitoring program;
- Imposition of an institutional control in the form of an environmental easement and,
- Development of a site management plan.

Several alternatives were explored, ranging in cost from \$12.2 million to \$410,000. After evaluation, alternative #3A was chosen. At a cost of \$3.4 million, this alternative was selected because it will achieve the remediation goals by creating the best conditions needed to restore groundwater quality. This alternative will not address bedrock groundwater contamination, but will remediate overburden groundwater to the extent technically feasible.

Currently, the Record of Decision has been issued and the NYSDEC central office legal staff are working on buyout possibilities with Lapp Insulator, Inc. Such buyout would allow Lapp Insulator, Inc. to pay what they could afford and the State would fund the rest. Lapp Insulator, Inc. has thus far spent \$1 million of its own money to fund studies and has set aside \$1.4 million to pay for cleanup. There remains the possibility of finding other potentially responsible parties that the State may approach for involvement.

For further information, please refer to the NYSDEC website at [www.dec.ny.gov](http://www.dec.ny.gov)



## **Oatka Creek Cleanup News**

Maureen Leupold

What can 15 volunteers accomplish by donating three hours of work, while walking a mile-long stretch of Oatka Creek on a crisp fall day? How about the cleanup of approximately 345 pounds of trash, including 17 tires and 9 bags of garbage along with various building materials and a TV! That's what the Oatka Creek Watershed Committee, students and faculty from Genesee Community College, Monroe Community College and area neighbors did at the Genesee Country Village and Museum in Mumfordsville one Saturday morning last September.

The activity was scheduled as part of the International Coastal Cleanup sponsored by the American Littoral Society (ALS) and the Ocean Conservancy. The Coastal Cleanup is a worldwide event in which over 100 countries and almost all of the United States participate.

"Participating in a cleanup helps people see that the choices they make directly impact the environment - recycling, advocating less use of plastic, lobbying for less packaging, and reusing items instead of discarding them - all have a positive effect on the environment." (ALS, 2007)

This year we have scheduled another cleanup at Oatka Creek Park in Wheatland at Garbutt for Saturday September 26 from 9:00-1:00. Please join us in our effort to preserve Oatka's water quality and unique wildlife habitat. Be sure to wear sturdy shoes and clothes that can get wet and dirty. If you have waders or hip boots, bring them along. Some shoreline areas may be very weedy so long sleeves and pants will offer more protection. For more information contact Maureen Leupold at **maleupold@genesee.edu** or 585-343-0055 x 6394.