

**OATKA CREEK WATERSHED COMMITTEE**

**OUTREACH PROGRAM:  
A REPORT ON PHASE I**

**February, 2002**

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### INTRODUCTION

The Oatka Creek watershed encompasses approximately 215 square miles (557 km<sup>2</sup>) and parts of 4 counties in western New York State (Wyoming, Genesee, Monroe, and Livingston Counties). The boundaries of the watershed can be seen on the map attached at the end of this report. The headwaters of Oatka Creek are located in Wyoming County, south of the Village of Warsaw. Along its length of approximately 58 miles (93 km), it flows north through several towns and villages, until it "turns" east just north of the Village of LeRoy and ultimately reaches the Genesee River east of the Village of Scottsville.

The Oatka Creek Watershed Committee was formed in 1998 as an outcome of the Caring For Creeks Conference held in Rochester, NY of that year. Representatives from several agencies and concerned citizens guided the formation of the group. Today, the Oatka Creek Watershed Committee consists of representatives and citizens from the four counties that make up the watershed. One goal of the Oatka Creek Watershed Committee is to facilitate the development of an Oatka Creek Watershed Management Plan that is accepted and used as a guide for all municipalities and individuals that affect Oatka Creek, it's watershed, and it's tributaries. The development of an Outreach Program to inform, receive information from, and promote communication with the various municipalities in the watershed was deemed as a critical step in this process.

The Oatka Creek Watershed Committee Outreach Program was designed to:

- 1.) Familiarize municipalities with the mission and goals of the Oatka Creek Watershed Committee.
- 2.) Collect information about the Oatka Creek Watershed from municipalities.
- 3.) Request a contact person from each municipality to act as a liason between the Oatka Creek Watershed Committee and municipality. To ask for that municipality's participation in future efforts to facilitate the development of a Watershed Management that will protect water quality in Oatka Creek.

### THE PROCESS

The Outreach Subcommittee (of the Oatka Creek Watershed Committee) was formed to guide the procedures for scheduling presentations with municipalities, developing the Outreach Presentation, and organizing presentation teams. Presentation teams

included members of the Oatka Creek Watershed Committee. Efforts were made to include a mix of technical presenters with individuals with experience or knowledge of each municipalities region of the watershed. Presentation teams usually consisted of at least 3 members.

Fifteen towns, five villages, and two other government committees (Wyoming County Water Resource Coordinating Committee and the Genesee County Water Quality Coordinating Committee) were scheduled from October, 2000 through June, 2001. Most of the meetings with municipalities occurred between April and June, 2001. After the first three meetings, it was determined that a standardized recording sheet would help to organize information gathered at the meeting. One of the presenters was designated as the recorder at each meeting. Also, a brief water quality survey was distributed to the municipal officials. They were asked to complete this survey and return it to the Outreach Subcommittee at their earliest convenience (an addressed, stamped envelope was provided). It was anticipated that this survey would also help to receive feedback from municipal officials who were not in attendance on that particular evening. Other materials that were given to the municipal officials at each meeting included a map of the watershed, a brochure designed by the Oatka Creek watershed Committee, a brief summary of the State of The Basin Report, and in some cases, a copy of a Trace Metals/Geochemistry Report for Oatka Creek. A final draft of the State Of The Basin Report should be completed soon and will be distributed to each municipality.

The meetings with municipalities were generally scheduled through the Town (or Village) Clerk's Office. In some cases, the Town Supervisor, Mayor or other officials were contacted before finalizing a meeting. All municipalities contacted were very cooperative in scheduling a 20-minute (approximate) block of time during one of their Board meetings for the Outreach Program.

### **THE OUTREACH PRESENTATION**

The general format of the Outreach Presentation was as follows:

- I. Introductions
- II. Brief description of the purposes of the Outreach Program and Presentation
- III. A 10-12 minute slide show that introduces the Oatka Creek watershed and some of the efforts of the Oatka Creek Watershed Committee
- IV. Comments, questions and discussion with the Municipal Officials present

The 10-12 minute slide show consisted of several short parts. It was divided into 4 sections. The first few minutes described the importance of Oatka Creek, discussed the concept of a watershed, and described some qualities of the Oatka Creek Watershed. The second section outlined the composition of the Oatka Creek Watershed Committee, its Mission Statement, and some activities the Committee has been involved in. The third section discussed the importance of developing a Watershed Management Plan for Oatka Creek and the importance of municipality participation in developing that plan. The final section included a summary and three "critical questions" for municipal officials that would hopefully stimulate discussion.

Those critical questions were:

1. What do you think are the most important water quality problems?
2. What are the (known or suspected) causes of water quality problems?
3. What actions need to be taken to improve water quality?

### **CONTRIBUTIONS FROM MUNICIPAL OFFICIALS DURING THE MEETING**

This section summarizes the feedback received from municipal officials during the meetings. Some of the feedback was provided during the slide show presentation, but most of the dialogue occurred after. Feedback included responses to the “critical questions”, other general comments, and questions. Many of the comments and questions were stated by officials of more than one municipality.

Water Quality (and other) Concerns:

- Septic systems – not functioning properly
- Flooding due to trees and other debris in creek
- Erosion – streambank and watershed
- Silt accumulation, channel is shallower than it used to be
- Wetland quality – silt accumulation is increasing
- Discharge from industries into the creek
- Junkyards
- Salt storage
- Brine wells
- Drinking water supply – quantity in creek
- Wellhead protection; well contamination, probably from faulty septic systems
- Need more access
- Manure, nutrient runoff
- Loss of farmland
- Pesticide runoff
- Pollution from fish hatchery, golf courses?

Questions:

- Who has the responsibility to clean or maintain water quality in the creek?
- Who enforces a “master plan” document?
- Who funds improvements; e.g. a municipal sewage system?
- What is the Oatka Creek Watershed Committee’s role in improving water quality?
- What will the Oatka Creek Watershed Committee do with information gathered at these meetings?
- What types of things can a municipality do to help?
- How can municipalities receive funding for improvements?
- Is there duplication with DEC’s efforts?

Other Comments:

- Need to improve agricultural Best Management Practices
- Suggest putting curves back in stream to slow it down
- Build up an education program; publicity is important

- Create barriers between the creek and agricultural areas, buffer strips
- Impressed with county efforts to control liquid manure applications
- Concerns that signs indicating watershed boundaries were erected without informing landowners
- A couple of towns with only a small portion of land in the watershed questioned how significant their contributions may be
- "Good Work"; "Very Good Presentation"

### **SURVEY OF MUNICIPAL OFFICIALS – SUMMARY**

A water quality survey was distributed to municipal officials at the end of the meeting. They were asked to complete it within a few weeks and return it to the Outreach Program Subcommittee using the envelope provided. Copies of the survey were also left for officials of the municipality who were not present at the meeting.

The results of the survey (along with a copy of it) are detailed in the Appendix at the end of this report. Since most of the towns and villages are located in Wyoming County, most of the surveys were distributed there. The return rates varied by county. Overall, 23.4% of the distributed surveys were returned.

As part of the survey, officials were asked to respond to a series of questions with choices. The following trends were found in this section of the survey, most of the respondents indicated that Oatka Creek is important or very important to their community. They generally ranked the water quality as good and most indicated that the Oatka Creek Watershed Committee was a source of information about Oatka Creek for them. The respondents indicated a variety of "significant sources of pollution", although agricultural fertilizers, animal manure, streambank erosion and erosion from the land were most common. Fishing, irrigation, boating, and aesthetics were selected as the primary uses of the creek. Most of the respondents indicated that a Watershed Management Plan is important or very important for Oatka Creek and that their municipality should be involved at some level in development of that plan.

The last section of the survey asked the respondent to provide any other comments or questions they may have. The following list reflects a majority of those responses:

- Flooding after snowmelt or heavy rain; likely due to obstructions (fallen trees) in the stream; logjams
- What types of chemicals are being tested for?
- Animal manure from the thousands of cows in the town
- Runoff from junkyards (old cars); old farm dumps
- Presentation was very informative; I have a better understanding of the watershed
- Applaud your efforts to maintain a clean creek
- Difficult to answer some of the questions since the creek does not flow through our town

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The Oatka Creek Watershed Committee Outreach Program has been successful in working towards the three goals stated in the introduction of this report. The Program successfully provided information to all of the towns and villages in the watershed. This information included facts about Oatka Creek, its watershed, and the efforts of the Oatka Creek Watershed Committee. The program emphasized that the goal of the Oatka Creek Watershed Committee is to facilitate the preparation of a watershed management plan that is accepted and used as a guide for all municipalities and stakeholders in the Oatka Creek Watershed. All of the municipalities were receptive, open, and generally complimentary of the presentation.

The Oatka Creek Watershed Committee collected a variety of information from the municipalities as well. The lists of water quality issues, questions and concerns of municipal officials and their constituents, and other general comments provided in this report are evidence of this. This information was collected at the meetings and through the water quality survey distributed to municipal officials.

The third goal of the Program was to request that the municipalities become more involved in future efforts of the Oatka Creek Watershed Committee. These efforts include cooperation in the development of an Oatka Creek Watershed Management Plan. The municipalities were asked to designate a contact person, or liaison, to the Oatka Creek Watershed Committee. To date, 13 of the 20 municipalities have done so, 1 municipality has indicated it probably will not, and it is hoped the remaining 6 municipalities will soon designate a liaison. Information will be sent to the Town Clerk's office in cases where a liaison has yet to be designated. A list of the liaisons can be found in the Appendix.

## **APPENDIX**

The following items can be found in the Appendix (in order, beginning on pg. 6):

1. Municipal Liaisons
2. Survey of Municipal Officials – survey and results
3. Map of the Oatka Creek Watershed

**MUNICIPALITY LIAISONS FOR OCWC**

**FEBRUARY, 2002**

<b>MUNICIPALITY(COUNTY)</b>	<b>LIAISON</b>	<b>TITLE</b>
Bergen, Town (Genesee)		
Bethany, Town (Genesee)		
Caledonia, Town (Livingston)		
Caledonia, Village (Livingston)	David Witherspoon	Officer
Castile, Town (Wyoming)	Stanley Klein	Councilperson
Covington, Town (Wyoming)	Bob Kelly Jerry Davis	Councilperson Supervisor
Gainesville, Town (Wyoming)	Harold Bush	Supervisor
LeRoy, Town (Genesee)	Gerry Halligan	Councilperson
LeRoy, Village (Genesee)		
Middlebury, Town (Wyoming)	Janice Lee	Planning Bd.
Orangeville, Town (Wyoming)	Debby Spink	Town Clerk
Pavilion, Town (Genesee)	John Strartheam Henry Wright	Highway Dept. Councilperson
Perry, Town (Wyoming)		
Scottsville, Village (Monroe)	Rick Venvertloh	Councilperson
Stafford, Town (Genesee)		
Warsaw, Town (Wyoming)	Michael Marley	Councilperson
Warsaw, Village (Wyoming)	Robert Moran	Mayor
Wethersfield, Town (Wyoming)	Ronald Herman	Supervisor
Wheatland, Town (Monroe)		
Wyoming, Town (Wyoming)	Mitzi Yauchzee Margaret Tackbury	Councilperson Councilperson

# OATKA CREEK WATERSHED COMMITTEE

## OATKA CREEK WATER QUALITY SURVEY

### (MUNICIPAL OFFICIALS)

Please provide the following information before beginning the survey:

Name (optional): \_\_\_\_\_  
Municipality: \_\_\_\_\_  
Title/Business: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

For each of the following questions, please check one response unless otherwise indicated by the question.

1. How important is Oatka Creek to your municipality?

- very important
- important
- somewhat important
- not important

2. How would you "grade" the water quality of Oatka Creek?

- excellent (very little or no pollution)
- good (some pollution)
- fair (moderate pollution)
- poor (heavy pollution)

3. From the list below, place an "X" next to the sources where you have received information about Oatka Creek:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> constituents       | <input type="checkbox"/> Oatka Creek Watershed Committee     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> personal knowledge | <input type="checkbox"/> other municipalities                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> NYSDEC - reports   | <input type="checkbox"/> other committees in my municipality |
| <input type="checkbox"/> scientific reports | <input type="checkbox"/> newspapers                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> other (specify):   |  |



4. On average, how do you think your constituents would "grade" the water quality of Oatka Creek?

- excellent (very little or no pollution)
- good (some pollution)
- fair (moderate pollution)
- poor (heavy pollution)

5. From the list below, identify the 4 most significant potential sources of pollution to Oatka Creek. Rank them from "1" to "4" ("1" is most significant).

- streambank erosion
- groundwater sources
- human sewage
- fertilizers (lawn)
- fertilizers (agricultural)
- runoff from roads
- erosion from the land (watershed)
- polluted tributaries (specify: \_\_\_\_\_)
- industrial discharge (specify: \_\_\_\_\_)
- animal manure
- pesticides
- other (specify: \_\_\_\_\_)

6. From the list below, identify the 3 most common human uses of Oatka Creek in your area.

Rank them from "1" to "4" ("1" is most common).

- fishing
- bathing/swimming
- boating
- aesthetics
- other (specify: \_\_\_\_\_)
- drinking water
- irrigation
- agricultural uses (besides irrigation)
- industrial uses

7. What do you think will happen to the amount of human use of Oatka Creek in the future?

- human use will decrease
- human use will remain the same
- human use will increase

8. How important is the development of an "Oatka Creek Watershed Management Plan"?

- very important
- important
- somewhat important
- not important

9. Would you like to be involved in the development of a "Oatka Creek Watershed Management Plan?"

- yes
- no

10. How much should your municipal committee be involved in the protection of Oatka Creek and its watershed?

- very involved
- involved
- somewhat involved
- not involved

11. OTHER – In the space below, please indicate any other comments that are relevant to the Oatka Creek watershed. If you have questions for the Oatka Creek Watershed Committee, please indicate them here.

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**OATKA CREEK WATERSHED COMMITTEE  
SURVEY – MUNICIPAL OFFICIALS**

**CONDUCTED IN 2001**

**SUMMARY - PERCENT RETURNED**

<b>COUNTY</b>	<b>Number Distributed</b>	<b>Number Returned</b>	<b>% Returned</b>
Wyoming	85	16	18.8
Genesee	22	8	36.4
Livingston	11	5	45.5
Monroe	6	0	0.0
<hr style="border-top: 1px dashed black;"/>			
Total	124	29	23.4

**SUMMARY - INDIVIDUAL RESPONSES**

<b>COUNTY (# RESPONDENTS)</b>	<b>WYOMING (16)</b>	<b>GENESEE (8)</b>	<b>LIVINGSTON (5)</b>
<b>1. IMPORTANCE</b>			
very important	7	1	2
important	3	2	1
somewhat important	5	5	2
not important	1	0	0
<b>2. WATER QUALITY</b>			
excellent	1	0	0
good	12	5	4
fair	2	2	0
poor	0	0	0
no response	1	1	1
<b>3. SOURCES OF INFORMATION</b>			
constituents	4	0	0
personal knowledge	7	4	2
NYSDEC	2	2	1
Scientific reports	0	0	0
OCWC	13	8	2
Other municipalities	2	1	0
Committees in my munic.	0	1	0
Newspapers	1	3	0
Other	1	1	1

COUNTY (# RESPONDENTS)	WYOMING (16)	GENESEE (8)	LIVINGSTON (5)
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#### 4. CONSTITUENT'S GRADE OF WATER QUALITY

excellent	0	0	0
good	12	5	5
fair	3	2	0
poor	0	0	0
no response	1	1	0

#### 5. MOST SIGNIFICANT SOURCES OF POLLUTION

Many of the respondents did not rank their selections or follow the directions correctly. Therefore, the ranking will be ignored and the data reflect the number of respondents that indicated each of the following as a potential source of pollution.

Streambank erosion	8	4	0
Groundwater sources	3	1	1
Human sewage	6	3	1
Fertilizers (lawn)	2	1	0
Fertilizers (Agricultural)	11	4	3
Runoff from roads	4	4	1
Erosion from land	8	4	2
Polluted tributaries	4	1	0
Industrial discharge	1	0	1
Animal manure	11	3	1
Pesticides	4	2	2
Other	2	1	0

#### 6. MOST COMMON USES

Again, many of the respondents did not rank their selections correctly. The ranking will be ignored and the data reflect the number of respondents that indicated each of the following as a common use.

Fishing	16	8	5
Bathing/swimming	2	1	1
Boating	5	5	2
Aesthetics	3	4	4
Drinking water	2	0	0
Irrigation	9	3	0
Agricultural uses	4	1	0
Industrial uses	3	0	0
Other	0	0	1

#### 7. FUTURE HUMAN USE

decrease	2	2	0
remain the same	5	5	1
increase	8	1	4
no response	1	0	0

<b>COUNTY (# RESPONDENTS)</b>	<b>WYOMING (16)</b>	<b>GENESEE (8)</b>	<b>LIVINGSTON (5)</b>
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**8. IMPORTANCE OF A WATERSHED  
MANAGEMENT PLAN**

very important	8	2	3
important	6	5	1
somewhat important	2	1	1
not important	0	0	0

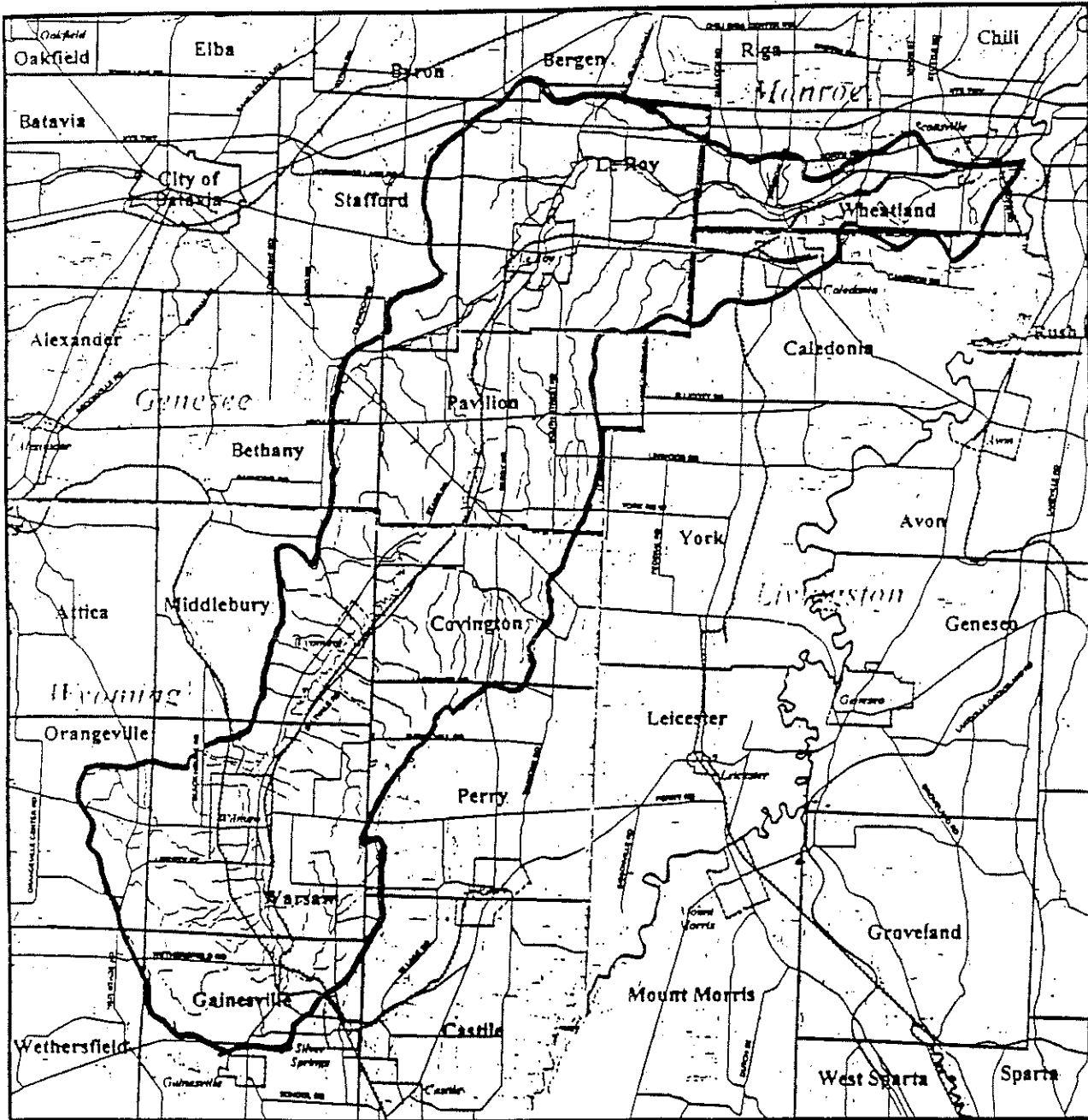
**9. WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE  
INVOLVED IN PLAN DEVELOPMENT**









Yes	7	3	3
No	8	5	2
No response	1	0	0

**10. HOW INVOLVED SHOULD YOUR  
MUNICIPAL COMMITTEE BE**

Very involved	3	0	0
Involved	5	7	3
Somewhat involved	7	1	1
Not involved	0	0	1
No response	1	0	0

# OATKA CREEK WATERSHED



-  Oatka Creek Watershed
-  County Boundary
-  Town Boundary
-  City Boundary
-  Village Boundary
-  Road
-  Railroad
-  Hydrography

Source: Hydrologic Watershed Unit Map, US Department of Agriculture, 1988.  
 New York State Department of Transportation, June 1999.  
 Prepared by Genesee/Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council, February 2008.

