



## 2021 Summary of Activities January – December 2021

The top accomplishments of the Oatka Creek Watershed Committee (OCWC) in 2021 included: meeting with new interested individuals, organizations and municipal leaders, continued work with partners and watershed stakeholders and continuing to expand use of social media including webpage postings, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. We are currently working toward balancing our watershed activities including, local government and organizational meetings, participating in community sponsored festivals and other activities throughout the twenty-six municipalities in the watershed.

In 2021 the OCWC engaged in outreach activities and projects with the Town of Wheatland, Chili - Wheatland Middle School, Village of Caledonia, Village of Le Roy, Town of Middlebury, Genesee, Monroe and Wyoming County SWCDS, Monroe County Parks Department, Boy Scouts of America, Genesee River Watch (GRW), Genesee Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council (GFLRPC), New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYDEC), Genesee Country Village and Museum (GCV&M), Trout Unlimited and others.

Appointments and Meetings- The monthly Regular Meeting and 2020 Meeting of The Corporation was held on January 25, 2021. Corporate Officers – Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and Treasurer all agreed to continue in their current positions. Three Directors were appointed to fill expired appointments. Throughout 2021, eight Directors served on the Oatka Creek Watershed Committee Board of Directors. Alan Garrett was nominated to fill the vacancy that expires at the end of 2022.

Meeting activities are posted on the Oatka Creek Watershed Committee website [www.oatka.org](http://www.oatka.org) and Facebook. Meeting Minutes are sent via email to a mailing list of interested parties, municipalities and local organizations. All monthly meetings in 2021 were held remotely using Zoom.

Other monthly meetings were held on the following dates: February 22<sup>th</sup>, March 15<sup>th</sup>, April 19<sup>th</sup>, May 17<sup>th</sup>, June 21<sup>th</sup>, August 16<sup>th</sup>, September 20<sup>th</sup>, October 18<sup>st</sup> and November 15<sup>th</sup>. There was no July or December meeting.

*Note: As with other organizations in 2021 due to Covid 19 restrictions, in person meetings and indoor activities were restricted. The OCWC did its best to continue with it's Mission and planned activities.*

## Activities

### January:

- 1- The OCWC assisted Chili – Wheatland Middle School with class projects including loaning water quality testing equipment and ideas for a class tree planting project.
- 2- The OCWC had the opportunity to provide comments to Monroe County SWCD on the Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) Strategic Plan (2021-2025) and is a member of the AEM Advisory Committee.
- 3- In preparation for meeting with the Village of Caledonia, Chairman Peter Lent and Board Member Alan Garrett completed a village walk in preparation for the upcoming municipal outreach meeting. The walk focused on Spring Creek and the Mill St. area. Alan is also working with the Town of Caledonia and the Arbor Day Tree City Program sponsored by the Arbor Day Foundation and the US Forest Service.

### February:

- 1- Chairman Peter Lent participated in a conference with Monroe County SWCD and Monroe County Environmental Services to review the AEM Strategic Plan 2021-2025. Genesee County SWCD AEM Strategic Plan was completed in December 2020.
- 2- The OCWC Board of Directors discussed planned spring tree planting and maintenance of past plantings at the Balonek Farm, Indian Allen Park and Oatka Creek Park.
- 3- The OCWC Board participated in a discussion with George Thomas of Genesee River Watch (GRW) regarding being a participant in GRW proposed crowd sourcing of tree seedlings used in planting within stream riparian areas. There is a need for large quantities often greater than tree nurseries might have available for riparian plantings. OCWC is supportive of both the crowd sourcing project and a GRW grant application to the Great Lakes Research Consortium. *Note: The GRW donated a supply of used stakes and tree tubes to OCWC for their 2021 tree planting and maintenance.*

### March:

- 1- OCWC received permission from Monroe County Park officials to use Board Member Steve Leupold's idea to construct a barrier around newly planted tree seedlings using multiple recycled Christmas trees which are anchored around the seedlings to deter deer from being able to get close enough to browse on the new seedlings. Note: deer browsing is a major detriment to new forest seedling generation impacting most hardwoods and many conifer species.
- 2- Vice Chair Maureen Leupold is participating in planning discussions for the Trail Town Initiative for the Town of Wheatland. Wheatland and Scottsville would be on the northern end of the trail that will connect neighboring communities and also connect into the Genesee Valley Greenway.

#### April:

- 1- OCWC participated in Pick Up the Parks on April 17<sup>th</sup> in Oatka Creek Park. There were seven volunteers that were at the trash pickup event and assisting with tree maintenance. Steve Leupold was assisted by local Boy Scouts that helped bring old Christmas trees to planting sites for the first placement of the trees to act as a deer barrier. The scouts also helped replace fallen tree tubes on trees planted in prior years.
- 2- Pete, Maureen and Steve assisted the Genesee River Watch with harvest of willow and dogwood live stake cuttings. The cuttings will be used in riparian planting sites to stabilize the streambanks and provide forest cover.
- 3- OCWC assisted Genesee County SWCD, and Village of Le Roy Dept. of Public Works employees at the Village of Le Roy, Mill Street Park with a streambank planting on Oatka Creek. Overall, the event went well and the work was finished earlier than anticipated. Plantings were placed in three different zones. The bottom zone was a live stake mixture of Red Osier Dogwood, a mix of Viburnums, and Button Bush. The second zone was along the slope of the bank and had a mixture of shrubs that included Witch Hazel and Black Chokeberry. The top zone had a wild flower mix containing Black Eyed Susan, Coneflower, and others.

#### May:

- 1- The OCWC continued a meeting discussion which began in April, in learning about soil health practices and other agronomy best management practices (BMPS) such as cover cropping, and the difference between agronomic and structural erosion control best management practices (BMPs). Structural BMPs included mainly Water & Sediment Control Best Management Practices. Board Members and attending guests requested more information to gain additional knowledge and background on these practices which reduce

erosion and sedimentation and are important to maintaining healthy and productive agricultural land within the watershed.

- 2- OCWC with volunteers planted trees and conducted spring tree maintenance in the riparian zone of Oatka Creek Park.
- 3- The OCWC discussed ways to encourage municipalities to change local laws to include Watershed Management Plan recommendations and also, change regulations for private septic systems which generally come under County Health Department control.

#### June:

- 1- The OCWC discussed ways to get more interest and activities in the southern part of Oatka Creek Watershed mainly in Wyoming County. Ideas included displays and program information for local libraries, Genesee Community College Biology and Environmental Science classes, and working with Wyoming County SWCD technicians that do stream sampling.

*Note: Due to Covid 19 restrictions, summer festivals were very limited during the Summer 2021*

#### July: Meeting Cancelled

#### August:

- 1- Board Member Jim Seiler contacted the USDA – Natural Resources Conservation Service Plant Materials Center (PMC) to discuss opportunities for OCWC to collaborate and participate in trial plantings of willow seedlings and live stakes for edge of stream plantings. *Note: The PMC develops plant varieties for area like streambank stabilization or erosion control and relies on Conservation Districts and other organizations to do trial plantings of their plant varieties which are native plants. The PMC also works with nurseries who may propagate the PMC developed cultivars.*
- 2- OCWC Member Richard Shimley stepped down from the Board of Directors. We are most grateful and thankful that Richard was a part of the Oatka Creek Watershed Committee. We often relied on his knowledge of the Village of Le Roy and its past history. Thanks Richard, for being a part of our organization!
- 3- The OCWC discussed improving outreach to potential volunteers by working more closely with students interested in community service, organizations

including the Boy Scouts and other organizations that focus on outdoor environmental stewardship. The OCWC is considering developing activity brochures and either utilizing a OCWC newsletter or articles posted in the SWCD newsletters.

### September:

- 1- The OCWC continued discussion of working with the PMC to plant native willows or live stakes on streambank areas where we are currently working i.e., Oatka Creek Park and Balonek Farm. Shawna Clark the PMC Manager recommended we wait, until Spring 2022. The PMC would provide several varieties of willow live stakes for each location. The OCWC and volunteers would plant at both sites and monitor and report progress to the PMC as a variety trial.

### October:

- 1- Members of the OCWC on September 21<sup>st</sup> and October 7<sup>th</sup> assisted the GCV&M with maintenance at two tree planting sites. Trees on both the east and west side locations along Oatka Creek were checked and unneeded tree tubes were removed from the larger trees. On October 7<sup>th</sup> the members had a chance to meet students from Norman Howard School that works on monthly activities at the GCV&M so, each group had a chance to learn about the other groups activities.
- 2- Jim contacted the (T) of Covington, (T) Middlebury and (V) Wyoming to discuss meeting with each municipality to discuss the OCWC and Oatka Plan. Pete is preparing electronic copies of the booklets for printing at Batavia Legal Printing. The meetings will be scheduled in December 2021 or sometime in 2022.
- 3- The OCWC discussed log and debris jams on Oatka Creek mainly on the flatter sections of the stream between Warsaw and Pavilion but, also north of the Village of Le Roy toward the northern section in the Town of Wheatland. Wyoming County SWCD is working with local highway officials to clear areas prone to flooding. The log and debris jams create both flooding and personal safety hazards.
- 4- The OCWC honored former founding OCWC member and Genesee County SWCD Manager George Squires with a tree planted in recognition for his years of dedication to conservation activities, environmental management and educational programs and county level watershed planning.

### November:

- 1- The OCWC discussed planting locations for 2022 willow live stake plantings and forwarded location and other information to the USDA-NRCS Plant Materials Center.
  
- 2- Board member Jim Seiler contacted the (V) Wyoming, (T) Covington to schedule meeting with the municipalities in early 2022.
  
- 3- The OCWC discussed the benefits of stream riparian buffers in filtering sediment and nutrients and also discussed the barriers in getting agricultural producers and rural landowners to actually implement stream buffer practices.

### December: Meeting Cancelled

On December 8, 2021, Peter Lent, Jim Seiler and Al Fagan – Wyoming County SWCD Manager made a presentation to the Town of Middlebury regarding OCWC, the Watershed Management Plan and SWCD planning and implementation activities and programs.

### Accomplishments

During April – May OCWC members participated as volunteers for Monroe County Pick-Up the Parks, also tree planting and maintenance at Oatka Creek Park. Boy Scout volunteers assisted with placing recycled Christmas trees as “deer barriers” around newly planted tree seedlings.

OCWC assisted Genesee County SWCD, and Village of Le Roy DPW at Mill St. Park with planting trees, shrubs, and a mix of wildflowers along Oatka Creek to enhance the streambank and a buffer area along the edge of the park.

Chairman Peter Lent, Board Member Jim Seiler, and Wyoming County SWCD Manager Al Fagan met with the Town of Middlebury Supervisor and Board Members on December 8, 2021, to discuss the OCWC, Watershed Management Plan and the SWCD programs and implementation activities which benefit water quality, agriculture, and the environment.

### Seminars and Training and Self Development-

Chairman Peter Lent participated in scheduled Wyoming County Water Quality Coordinating Committees in January, April and October.

Vice Chair Maureen Leupold and Steve Leupold attended the NY Conservation District Employees Association Annual Training Session March 8-12, 2021 (virtual meeting).

Vice Chair Maureen and Steve attended the NY Conservation District Employee's Association Annual Training & Meeting October 19-22, 2021.

Chairman Peter Lent and Board Member Jim Seiler participated in a Penn State Sponsored Buffer Webinar October 27, 2021.

### Goals and Expectations:

The future goals and expectations of the OCWC include: continued outreach to all counties, towns and villages within the Oatka Creek Watershed and a review of the Oatka Creek Watershed Management Plan with recommendations to consider incorporating the plan into local laws and planning activities. The OCWC and partner organizations take an active interest in Oatka Creek and the many issues it may face including - flooding, log and debris jams, water quality problems created by nutrients and sedimentation, contaminants and invasive species. The short- term goal of the OCWC is to update the Oatka Plan. Long term the goal is the formation of an intermunicipal watershed-based organization as described in the Oatka Plan.

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