

# Cayuga Lake Watershed Intermunicipal Organization

May 2001 Newsletter



## Water Quality in the Cayuga Lake Watershed

Water quality management and protection in the Cayuga Lake watershed is needed to promote economic vitality and preserve environmental integrity in the region. Some of the most important economic activities in the watershed include agriculture, tourism and recreation, real estate, and business. Ecologically, the watershed provides important fish and wildlife

habitats, thousands of acres of wetlands and forests, and several state, county and town parks. In addition, residents depend on Cayuga Lake and local ground water for drinking water. Despite the generally high quality of water in our watershed, there are instances of groundwater contamination and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

(DEC) has identified Cayuga Lake and its tributaries as having impairments to water supply, fish populations, aesthetics, boating and bathing.

This is a good time to be addressing watershed issues in our region as state and federal agencies are increasingly considering watershed issues and management plans when making funding decisions.

## Why a Restoration and Protection Plan?

The *Cayuga Lake Watershed Restoration & Protection Plan* (RPP) is a guide for helping the general public, public officials, farmers, business community, environmentalists and others to manage Cayuga Lake watershed's valuable water resources. These collective actions will assure a more stable, economically viable, and

diverse watershed. We can take pride in the Plan and the collaborative, community-based process that was used to develop it. It is our vision that *RPP* will enable and encourage residents to become active stewards, helping to protect the watershed and its resources.

We, as residents of the watershed, need to be active participants by managing our own properties in a responsible manner. Providing stewardship for the whole watershed involves community action, participation in decisions of local town and county boards, and support for actions that promote sustainable development while protecting our natural assets.

Residents within our watershed community share a number of common goals, including:

- protecting the current uses of Cayuga Lake as a water supply and recreational resource;
- minimizing non-point

source pollution of both surface and groundwater and controlling or eliminating existing sources of pollution;

- preserving agricultural lands, open space and natural resources;
- expanding economic activities consistent with environmental protection;
- developing education programs for the general public and municipal officials;
- exploring mutually beneficial ways of securing and sharing federal, state, and county-agency funding to accomplish these shared goals;
- sharing the costs of monitoring for compliance with local, state, and federal regulations and enforcement of those regulations;
- resolving disputes regarding development projects with intermunicipal impacts and projects that impact environmentally sensitive areas;
- working with federal, state, and county agencies and authorities to assure that their activities in the

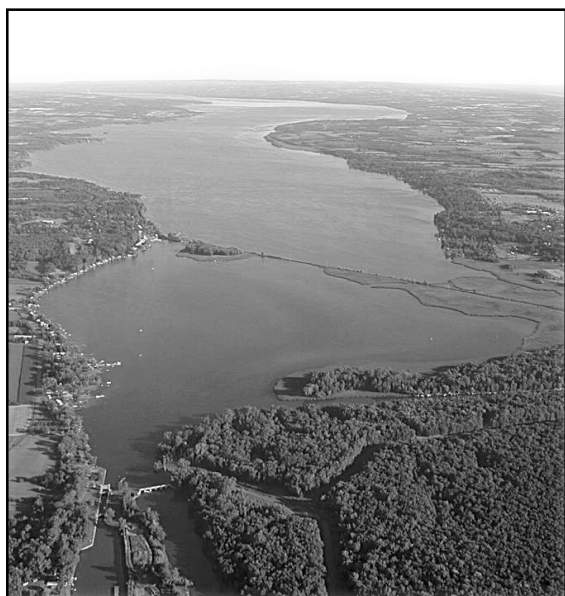


Photo by Bob Pfeiffer

*North end of Cayuga Lake looking South. Developers of the RPP are working to protect the waters in the Cayuga Lake Watershed while balancing economic and environmental concerns.*

# Cayuga Lake Watershed Intermunicipal Organization Member Municipalities



*Twenty-eight out of forty-four municipalities and four of six counties (Cayuga, Cortland, Seneca, and Tompkins County) in the Cayuga Lake Watershed have signed the Call for Cooperation and Resolution to Endorse and Watershed study for Cayuga Lake. Of the 28 member municipalities, there are 20 towns, 7 villages, and the City of Ithaca.*

Funding from the New York State Department of State (DOS), New York State Empire State Development, (ESD), New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC), the municipalities represented on the IO, and local contributions of volunteer time and funding has supported these efforts.

watershed are compatible with the plans and programs of the cooperating municipalities; and,

- understanding ecosystem dynamics within the watershed in an effort to prevent and/or respond to threats to its integrity.

## What is the IO?

The Cayuga Lake Watershed Intermunicipal Organization (IO) is a coalition of municipalities (cities, towns, and villages) working together to protect and improve the Cayuga Lake Watershed. Presently, 64% of the watershed municipalities (28 of 44 cities, towns and villages and 4 of 6 counties) have signed a Call for Cooperation and Resolution to Endorse a Watershed Study for Cayuga Lake and are therefore, members of the IO. Member municipalities account for 90% of the total land area in the watershed.

Land use planning and sound management practices are essential to controlling nonpoint sources of pollution and need not be in conflict with economic viability. Some of the economic benefits include protection of public health; reduction in costs related to environmental remediation and flooding; increased economic stability through enhancement of tourism and agricultural opportunities; and, guiding development to appropriate locations.

In New York State, towns and villages hold the authority for land use planning, regulation, and control. For this reason, the coordinated participation and involvement of the public and municipalities - and an organization such as the IO - are extremely important and will be instrumental in protecting and improving the health of the watershed. Throughout the watershed planning process the IO has been working to build coordination, cooperation, and partnerships with organizations and stakeholders to create effective and representative watershed stewardship.

## Watershed Issue Priorities as Determined by the Intermunicipal Organization Members

1. Agricultural Practices
2. Sediment Loading
3. Drinking Water
4. Water Quality Standards
5. Development
6. Stormwater Runoff
7. On-site Wastewater Systems
8. Tourism and Other Economic Development
9. Comprehensive Planning
10. Water Quality\*
11. Nutrient Loading
12. Wastewater and Wastewater Treatment Plants
13. Infrastructure
14. Education
15. Economic Revitalization & Sustainability

\*Top-ranked water quality issues in order are sediment, phosphorus, fertilizers and pesticides, organic compounds (especially toxic chemicals affecting the groundwater supply), heavy metals, pathogens and exotic species.

The IO has been working for approximately three years to develop the *Cayuga Lake Watershed Restoration and Protection Plan* and to ensure these partnerships work together effectively to achieve the shared goals of the watershed community.

The IO Web site ([www.cayugawatershed.org](http://www.cayugawatershed.org)) provides a wealth of information about the organization and our efforts to date, including the *Cayuga Lake Preliminary Watershed Characterization (2000)* and the draft *Restoration and Protection Plan*.

## Cayuga Lake Watershed Restoration & Protection Plan

Based on the priority watershed and water quality issues (see box this page), the *Restoration and Protection Plan (RPP)* has identified eleven management categories: public participation; coordination/collaboration and partnerships; education; agricultural practices; stormwater management and erosion control; wastewater systems management; hazardous

waste management; monitoring and assessment; wetland/shoreline and riparian corridor management; forestry and silviculture management; and regulatory management. For each management category, the *RPP* outlines goals and specific recommendations for achieving these goals. Please see the IO website for the draft *RPP* ([www.cayugawatershed.org](http://www.cayugawatershed.org)).

## Public Participation

There have been many opportunities for public participation throughout the *RPP* process. In a large part, the *RPP* has been molded by public participation. Since April, 2000, the IO has planned and conducted two series of meetings for the residents in the Cayuga Lake watershed. A third series is planned for May, 2001. Each of these meetings have been designed to gather information and public comments and ideas about watershed issues, what a protection and restoration plan should contain, and the most appropriate and effective management practices to support the *RPP*.

Several recurring themes were expressed at each of the four meetings, which have been grouped into larger categories. These issues include:

agricultural practices; run-off of pesticides and sediment; recreational values; wastewater treatment (or lack thereof); education on watershed protection; highway maintenance practices; construction and development impacts; protecting surface waters; regulatory tools for watershed protection; residential land practices; and pollution prevention.

This list of issues raised at the public meetings is by no means comprehensive, nor does it reflect any assigned priorities. Rather, it shows that many of the same issues surfaced at the respective public meetings throughout the watershed and, therefore, need to be covered in the *RPP*.

An important distinction between rural and urban communities also arose

*Continued on pg. 4*



*Public meetings provide the public an opportunity learn about what is happening in the watershed, voice concerns and issues, and to provide feedback on proposed items.*

## Public Participation *cont...*

at the public meetings. Generally, rural communities express greater concern about local agricultural practices while urban communities were more concerned about development, highway maintenance practices, government regulatory structures, remediation of polluted land, municipal drinking water/waste water treatment facilities, and nutrients in the lake. However, the unifying theme consistent throughout the forums was the need for more education to better understand the causes and effects of water uses and water quality impairments.

Likewise, all residents shared a concern for the health of their drinking water, the viability of the agricultural community, and the future health of the lake. The meetings gave many participants a chance to express their concerns and their hopes for the future of Cayuga Lake.

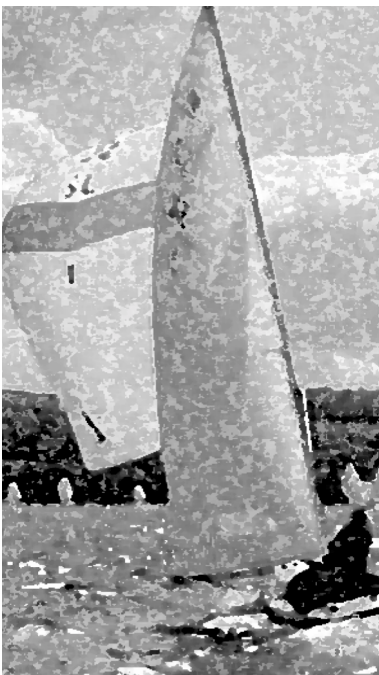
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Permit No. 59

# Is Your Water Safe?

Protect your drinking water, recreational resources, & environmental quality.

Let your opinions be heard! This is the public's chance to review and comment on the draft *Cayuga Lake Watershed Restoration and Protection Plan*. Take a critical look at the recommended actions designed to address your concerns about water quality and tell us what you think.



- Review the draft *Cayuga Lake Watershed Restoration and Protection Plan* at: [www.cayugawatershed.org](http://www.cayugawatershed.org) and click on the *Restoration and Protection Plan in Progress* link.
- Attend one of the public meetings listed below and provide comments and input at the public meetings or in writing by June 15, 2001 to Sharon Anderson at: P.O. Box 303, Interlaken, NY 14847 or e-mail [steward@fltg.net](mailto:steward@fltg.net)

**Thurs, May 17**  
7:00 to 9:00 p.m.  
So. Cayuga High School  
Route 34B, Poplar Ridge

**Wed, May 30**  
7:00 to 9:00 p.m.  
Interlaken Baptist Church  
Route 96, Interlaken

**Tues, May 22**  
7:00 to 9:00 p.m.  
Mynderse Academy HS  
Troy St, Seneca Falls

**Thurs, May 31**  
7:00 to 9:00 p.m.  
Boynton Middle School  
N. Cayuga St, Ithaca

These meetings are sponsored by the Cayuga Lake Watershed Intermunicipal Organization and hosted by the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network. For further information contact Sharon Anderson at: 607-532-4104 or [steward@fltg.net](mailto:steward@fltg.net).