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Greetings!



**OLA Honors John Forney,
Father of Oneida Lake Fisheries Research,
as 75th Anniversary Commemorative
Conservationist of the Year**

The Oneida Lake Association has honored outstanding fisheries scientist John Forney, Ph.D., Director Emeritus of the Cornell University Biological Field Station at Shackleton Point, as its **2020 Conservationist of the Year**. Dr. Forney was selected to receive the honor because throughout his career, he has gone above and beyond in his commitment to excellent and impactful research that helps Oneida Lake, its fish populations, and its anglers. The 2020 honor is doubly special because it is bestowed in commemoration of the 75th anniversary year of the OLA, and because it makes Forney the rarest of the rare: a two-time recipient of OLA's premier honor for conservation achievements.

Forney's leadership in Oneida Lake fisheries management is in its seventh decade, and his scholarly achievements and direction of the Shackleton Field Station's research agenda have led directly to the success of Oneida Lake's fish hatchery, fisheries programs, and efforts to preserve and promote our lake as one of New York State's vital waterways for angling and recreation. Dr. Forney has worked on Oneida Lake since 1956, when Cornell appointed him as founding director of the Shackleton Field Station.

At a socially-distanced lakeside ceremony held on Aug. 7, OLA presented Dr. Forney with the commemorative 75th Anniversary award, marked by a custom plaque depicting Oneida Lake. On hand were OLA directors and past Presidents; current and past Shackleton staff including Director Emeritus Ed Mills, Ph.D. and Senior Research Associate Randy Jackson, Ph.D., as well as members of the Forney family. OLA had originally planned to honor Forney at its April general membership meeting, The Directors made other arrangements when COVID-19 forced that meeting to be postponed. The August ceremony was marked by sunny skies, a bald eagle flyover, and legions of walleyes swimming offshore.

In his remarks, OLA President Bill Girvan recounted a story of how decades ago, he met Dr. Forney at a fishing educator training "like a young angler eager to talk to the legend," and as a result became inspired to get involved in Oneida Lake conservation.

Many attendees at the award ceremony shared similar personal stories about how Dr. Forney's passion for Oneida Lake led them to make lifelong commitments to conservation.

"Dr. Forney's research and leadership of Shackleton Point have made Oneida Lake one of the best studied and best managed lakes in the world," said President Girvan. "His career-long achievements in science and fisheries management have made him a role model for multiple generations of conservationists, and his work will continue to pay dividends for lake enthusiasts and anglers today and tomorrow."

For decades, fisheries management on Oneida Lake has been guided by Cornell's long-term ecosystem study of Oneida Lake, which was begun by Dr. Forney in 1956 and continues today thanks to research funding provided through the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. In 2020, Oneida Lake's walleye population topped one million adult fish, and this year's fishing has been the best in recent memory. Girvan pointed to these outcomes as evidence of Forney's unparalleled impact on Oneida Lake.

"Dr. Forney's wisdom was key to the success of DEC's Constantia hatchery, and he gave us our understanding of Oneida Lake's food web and the impacts of invasive species," said Girvan. "Under his leadership, Shackleton improved Oneida Lake's water bird habitat, re-established our lake's sturgeon population, gave us data that provided the push for cormorant management to protect game fish, and so many other success stories."

In the process, Oneida Lake became one of the best studied freshwater lakes in the world. Today, the lake is a role model for science-driven, public-private cooperation to manage sport fish and other resources.

The Conservationist of the Year award is OLA's highest honor for people involved in protecting these resources, but it is far from the only honor Forney has received in his illustrious career. A member of multiple fisheries managers' and biologists' halls of fame, he is also a 2020 inductee into the New York State Outdoorsmen Hall of Fame. The OLA Board of Directors voted unanimously to nominate Dr. Forney for the latter honor, and the NYSOHOF is planning its rescheduled award ceremony for this October. In his letter accompanying OLA's nomination of Forney to the NYSOHOF, Girvan wrote, "Dr. John Forney is recognized, not only in New York but all over the world, as one of the top fishery scientists and brilliant researchers who have dedicated their careers to revolutionize the way we understand and manage walleye populations."

Congratulations, Dr. Forney!



*OLA Director Rip
Colesante presents
Dr. Forney with an
OLA 75th Anniversary
fillet knife.*



Dr. Forney enjoys the socially-distanced company of his family, colleagues, and OLA Directors during his award ceremony.



OLA Director and Past President Dr. Ed Mills (who is another history-making scientist and student of Oneida Lake) speaks about the many achievements of John Forney during his legendary career.

Raising the daily limit on Oneida Lake walleyes?

Should the daily limit of Oneida Lake walleyes be raised from three fish to five fish? It turns out that's not an easy question to answer. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, however, is making a good attempt to get to the bottom of it.

In July's e-news, OLA let you know that DEC was surveying anglers to gather public opinion on the subject. DEC's initiative was motivated by the recent finding of a walleye population of more than 1 million adult fish in the lake, and the goal of maximizing angling opportunities when fishery conditions warrant it.

Although DEC hasn't yet announced its survey results, Fisheries Bureau leaders have been consulting with OLA and updating us throughout their decision making process. OLA doesn't have the survey tools or analytical resources of DEC, but when we asked our members for direct comments on the topic, we found some division of opinion. Most members seem to favor a five-fish limit, while some have concerns about overfishing and other pressures on our currently abundant walleye population. It is likely that DEC learned much the same thing from their survey.

We appreciate that DEC is committed to data-driven decision making. They are working diligently with the world-class researchers at Cornell University's Shackleton Point Research Station to understand what a change in limits might mean for our lake's walleyes, perch, and other game fish. DEC fisheries leaders are taking their time and doing their best to get the decision right, so the earliest the limit might change (if it does change) will be May 2021.

At the end of the day, OLA has always believed that Oneida Lake's fishery is special and therefore deserving of special regulations, when appropriate;

likewise we have always believed that sport anglers catching abundant fish for dinner is a commendable management goal. Balancing those priorities is no easy task. We are glad that the DEC is being thoughtful and responsible about this decision. We will continue to keep you updated as we learn more about this important question.

Protecting Oneida Lake from Fanwort Invasion

In cooperation with the Kasoag Lake Conservation Association, The Nature Conservancy and the SLELO PRISM (St. Lawrence Eastern Lake Ontario Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management) have collaborated to successfully treat 29.5 acres of the invasive aquatic plant called fanwort (*Cabomba caroliniana*) in Kasoag Lake. This effort not only restores Kasoag Lake but helps to protect Oneida Lake from fanwort encroachment.

Several years ago fanwort was discovered in Kasoag Lake which drains directly into Oneida Lake via the west branch of Fish Creek. After an initial treatment of the fanwort in Kasoag Lake, volunteers and SLELO PRISM staff conducted an extensive search along 17 miles of the west branch of Fish Creek. No fanwort populations were found in Fish Creek suggesting that this outbreak is currently limited to Kasoag Lake.

This summer a second treatment of fanwort was successful in eradicating fanwort from Kasoag Lake reducing the risk of this species traveling downstream into Oneida Lake.

Rob Williams

Invasive Species Program Manager

New Equipment in Cleveland to Improve Water Level Gauging

Along with the vastly improved angler access and striking aesthetics of the newly rebuilt Cleveland Pier, New York State has added another, less visible, but still useful feature--enhanced water level gauging equipment.

Operated by the New York State Canal Corporation, the new gauges provide improved accuracy, redundancy, and reliability over the equipment they replaced. This enables the Canal Corp. to more effectively manage the lake's water levels throughout the open water season.

Moving forward, Canal Corp. will maintain two pieces of apparatus at Cleveland: a small, submerged gauge recessed into the face of the seawall and an overhead radar gauge suspended high over the water like a streetlight. Both have been designed and positioned to maximize their accuracy while minimizing the chance that they will be damaged by ice or interfere with shore-casting anglers.

In our last issue, we failed to mention the name of this superb angler.



If you see OLA member Lou Ann Lachut or her husband, Bill, be sure to congratulate her on this catch. Maybe you'll get a dinner invite!

This electronic newsletter has now reached an important milestone. This is the 50th issue since this publication was inaugurated by former OLA President Scott Shupe! We thank Scott for his many contributions to the OLA, including the development of this newsletter. Your new editors are pleased to continue in the footsteps of his waders.

Would you like to Help the Oneida Lake Association?

We are looking for dedicated volunteers to serve on the Board of Directors for the Oneida Lake Association. If you'd like to help us carry on the mission of the Oneida Lake Association and help us Preserve and Protect our beautiful lake, this is the time to think seriously about stepping up.

The BOD currently has two Director vacancies. We need individuals who have people skills and an interest with interaction with the academic and government professionals. Good writing and technology skills are a bonus.

Directors serve 2-year terms, meet once a month, and may spend 3-6 hours a month on OLA business.

Each Director must serve on at least one standing committee, volunteer for special events, and anticipate advancement to an officer's position.

If you have an interest in serving OLA, please reach out to one of the Directors. Our contact info is at our website.

Write out your avocational resume, personal interests, and a professional background summary. Send them by snail or email to any OLA Director, or to President@OneidaLakeAssociation.org

Member's **FISHING TIPS.**

Feel free to offer up some of *your* short hints, tips, and tricks.

Here are classic tips from H.G. Tapply writing in *Field and Stream*.
<https://www.fieldandstream.com/32-vintage-fishing-tips/>

MEMBER QUESTIONS?

ONEIDA LAKE SIGNS. There are 20 signs around the lake bearing advertising support for the OLA's mission. At this time there is about a dozen firms of these advertisers who are no longer in business. If your company has interest in adopting one of these signs, and promoting both your business and OLA at a nominal expense, please contact an OLA Director or email President@OneidaLakeAssociation.org

Pay your dues, and HELP PROTECT ONEIDA LAKE!!!!
\$8 annually

Recruit your non-member neighbors and friends TO JOIN US!



Donate

Help OLA function. Memorials and contributions to our program are most welcome.

OLA is a 501(c)4 organization serving protection of the Oneida Lake environment.



[Website](#) [Who We Are](#) [What We Do](#) [How to Help](#)

OLA is a 501(c)(4) not-for-profit organization.

The Oneida Lake Association is a member of the New York State Conservation Council <http://www.nyscc.com/> and the New York State Federation of Lake Associations <http://www.nysfola.org/>.

Report environmental violations. Please remember to obey all laws, rules, regulations, and codes of ethics as they pertain to boating, fishing, hunting, and the management of Oneida Lake and its tributaries.

1-844-DEC-ECOS (1-844-332-3267)

Edited by John Harmon and Matt Snyder

Send us your notes and articles for use in future ENews!