

# The Oneida Lake Bulletin

Spring 2023

www.oneidalakeassociation.org

## Flood Mitigation on Oneida Lake

By OLA President John Harmon

**371** A nice, easy number to remember. 371. As simple as it is, this number might be the most important and most significant one to all of us in the Oneida Lake watershed. Sure, 1,000,000—the number of adult walleyes—is impressive. But not everyone fishes. 43 degrees north. That’s our latitude, but we don’t need a GPS to find the lake. 48 feet at its deepest. But if you’re out sailing, once you clear the first five feet, does it really matter? 371, however, affects us all. According to Howard Goebel, recently retired Chief Technical Officer from the Canal Corporation, that’s the target level of the lake surface, measured in feet above sea level. There may be no more important metric for us because that level affects practically everything we do on or around the lake. Eighteen inches lower and dangerous shoals are exposed. Our boats are stuck on their hoists, and launch ramps become useless. Eighteen inches higher and our docks are underwater (think back to August of 2021.) Miles of coastline get submerged, and relentless waves chew away our property, never to be recovered. Therefore, 371 is truly a magic number for Oneida Lake and its community. In fact, even as little as six inches of fluctuation can have a major impact on how we use the lake.

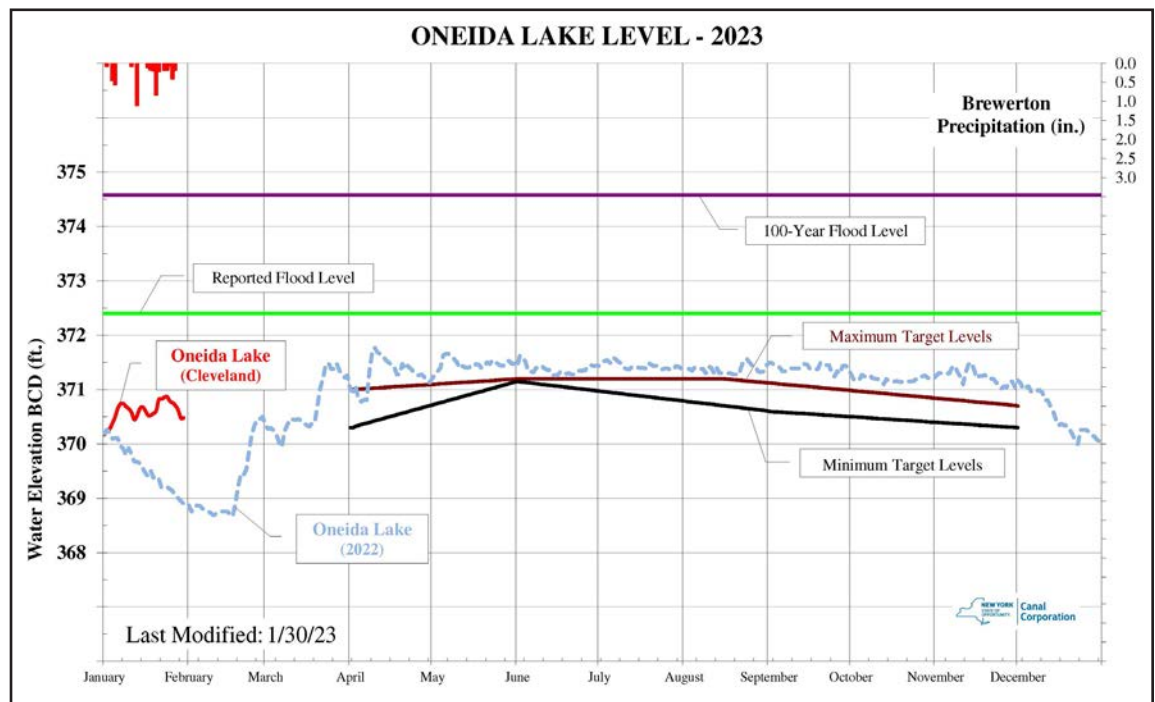
The New York State Canal Corporation, the government agency in charge of water levels on Oneida Lake, relies on seasonal targeted water levels between April and December in its attempt to keep water at the proper levels during seasonal fluctuations. (I say “attempt” because we all know that when Hydrologic Engineers plan, Mother Nature laughs). Take a look at the chart below. The Canal Corporation calls this the **Oneida Lake Rule Curve**, which was implemented in 1981.

The bottom line (black) is the minimum target level, adjusted by month. The line just above that (brown) is the maximum target level. Note that on December 1st of each year, the Canal Corporation fully opens the seven, 50-foot wide tainter gates associated with the Caughdenoy Dam along the Oneida River, the Oneida

Lake outlet. The Caughdenoy Dam gates are used between April and December to regulate Oneida Lake water levels.

Of course, these targets are designed to draw down the lake in the winter to provide storage in the lowered Oneida Lake for increased runoff entering the lake in the spring. Clearly, that boating season target hovers right around 371 feet. For comparison, the dotted blue line shows the actual lake level throughout 2022. Thankfully, that level stayed within a few inches of the maximum target during a significant drought in 2022. I think we can all agree that a few more inches of depth is better than the alternative. Finally, the green line moves us into Flood Level territory. You can see that adding only 18 inches of depth gets us

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# President's Message

So . . . **that** just happened!

In just a couple of weeks I will be finishing up my two-year stint as President of the Oneida Lake Association. As a long-time member, I never imagined that I would ever serve on the Board of Directors, and certainly I never saw myself as President. But it happened! Although it was a considerable amount of work, it was also enormously gratifying.

I'd like to close my term out by thanking the many, many individuals who helped along the way. First of all, the current Board is truly astounding. Esteemed historian, Doris Kearns Goodwin, wrote a terrific book, *Team of Rivals*, about the genius of Abraham Lincoln as he assembled his cabinet, comprised of men whom he had opposed, as well as men who at one time or another rivaled one another. This built-in tension and rivalry, Goodwin asserts, brought out the best in his team. Well, I'm not a genius like Lincoln. Instead, I was blessed with a Team of Talents. This leadership team brought a diversity of individual talents, as well as an eagerness to pitch in and do the hard work that it takes to get something done. For that I am truly appreciative.

Our thousands of members, too, deserve our thanks. We appreciate that you renew your membership each year. More than ever, these past few years have taught us that a robust membership does indeed get the attention of state officials. Other agencies that we consider as contributors include our many friends at DEC, especially those who work in the field and understand how our members feel about issues. Local parks, Law Enforcement personnel, and lakeside businesses, all contributed to the stewardship of Oneida Lake. For example, once again we thank Meyer's RV of Syracuse for the extremely generous grant they awarded us last year.

These two years have certainly been marked by challenges. My first day in office was in the midst of the mask-wearing, crowd-shirking shadow of Covid. For the

first time ever, we were forced to hold our Annual Membership Meeting through Zoom! (Sorry!) As we gradually poked our heads out into the sunlight, along came another issue. A group of First Nation people waded into Scriba Creek within yards of the Fish Hatchery and began spearing walleyes during the height of the spawning season. Though we support the respectful traditions of all nations, we could not stand by idly as this special resource becomes threatened. We immediately mounted opposition to this event, with numerous phone calls, emails, and letters to DEC officials, as well as our elected representatives. This struggle continues to this day. We truly appreciate all of the support we have been given by our membership.

Despite these challenges, your OLA has accomplished a great deal in the past two years. We have developed and adopted a mission statement that helps to clarify our overarching values and commitments. Our newly cleaned up website has a more modern look. Keeping that site updated is a constant goal. We use the website to provide a number of resources for our members. And our digital newsletter (enews) continues to keep our members up-to-date on the latest issues. (In fact, the NYS Federation of Lake Associations awarded our enews First Place as the best lake association newsletter in the state). I am most proud that the OLA has established its first ever Scholarship Program. We awarded scholarships to a high school senior and a returning college junior. Both students will pursue higher learning in the environmental sciences, helping to fulfill the mission of the OLA. And in just a couple of weeks, we will welcome, once again, all of our members to our in-person Membership Meeting. (See details on Page 6).

Finally, I'd like to say a few farewells. Region 7 DEC Captain Jim Boylan has moved on to a leadership position in Albany. Region 7 DEC Director, Matt Marko, has left the DEC to pursue other

opportunities. Randy Jackson, former researcher at the Cornell Field Station on Shackelton Point has now retired. And Howard Goebel has also recently retired from the Canal Corporation. All four have been tremendous friends of the OLA, providing their knowledge and insights in a great many ways. Their input and expertise will be missed.

I look forward to continued service to the OLA and shared stewardship of Oneida Lake!

*John Harmon*

John Harmon, President OLA  
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president@oneidalakeassociation.org

## The Oneida Lake Association, Inc. Founded in 1945

*The Bulletin* is published by the Oneida Lake Association, Inc., so that its members may be informed regarding the activities of the association. The Oneida Lake Association, Inc., was organized in 1945 to restore and preserve the natural resources of Oneida Lake and its environs.

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Mike Barretta                      George Reck  
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## Flood Mitigation

(Continued from page 1)

this flood stage, which is where we were (briefly) in August 2021. Hopefully, we won't need to talk about the purple line (1993!).

According to Goebel, "You never want to go below the 371 line. Never." He explains, "Since Oneida Lake was canalized over 100 years ago, considerable sediment loading has occurred from the numerous Oneida Lake tributaries. Operating Oneida Lake water levels below 371 feet would make many of the boat launches along the southern shore nearly unusable. At 371 feet, boaters have to trim their propellers up while encountering accumulated sediment until they reach deeper water. If Oneida Lake were maintained any lower, this situation would get much worse."

Although the NYS Canal Corporation has control of the entire canal system, it is the Western Division in Syracuse that has responsibility for maintaining the water levels of the Canal System within the Oswego River Basin (Oneida Lake, Oneida River, Cross Lake, and Oswego River.)

According to their website: "Lake-level regulation efforts are aimed at minimizing flood damage within the entire Oswego River Basin. Typically, following the navigation season, the system's water levels are lowered to provide storage for spring snowmelt and storm runoff. Prior to navigation season, water levels are raised gradually to predetermined safe levels for summer use. In the summer,

levels are regulated to provide reserve capacity sufficient to contain moderate runoff. Seasonal lake levels and other important factors such as maximum and minimum navigation levels are indicated on graphs called 'rule curves' that depict ideal levels for each lake."

The website explains that each season has its own protocols:

**FALL** – At the close of the navigation season, water levels are drawn down for storage capacity anticipating spring runoff.

**WINTER** – The lowest water level on the system can be achieved mindful of water supply needs.

**SPRING** – Storage capacity is maintained as long as possible to accept heavy runoffs, but gradual system increases must be undertaken to ensure target levels are reached for summer low water condition needs.

**SUMMER** – Competing needs must be balanced with the available water supply. (For a complete look at the website, see [www.canals.ny.gov/waterlevels/index](http://www.canals.ny.gov/waterlevels/index))

During his time successfully managing water levels for the Oswego River basin, including Oneida Lake, Howard Goebel relied on the Oneida Lake Rule Curve, as well as his extensive insights into weather trends and hydrology experiences. He believes that updating the rule curve would be a useful endeavor if it is going to be utilized to maintain Oneida Lake

water levels. He explains: "Given the sediment loading issues described previously coupled with the larger recreational boats that are commonly used, the Canal Corporation has maintained Oneida Lake 4 to 6 inches above the 371-foot target level to address these issues. Further, the rule curve calls for Oneida Lake water levels to begin being lowered on August 20th each year, even though recreational use continues through the end of the year. Explicitly following the rule curve would create a situation where lake uses in the fall and early winter would be challenging, especially during prolonged drought periods.

"One of the greatest opportunities for Oneida Lake would be the implementation of **water level forecasting**. Presently, such forecasting does not exist for Oneida Lake or any of its tributaries other than the Oneida Creek at Oneida, NY. The National Weather Service provides forecasts through their Advanced Hydrologic Prediction Service at many streams and lakes throughout the country. For example, the National Weather Service provides lake level forecasts for many locations in the adjacent Mohawk River watershed where forecasted water levels for the next two days are provided, and updated every four hours based on changing weather forecasts and observed precipitation and snowmelt.

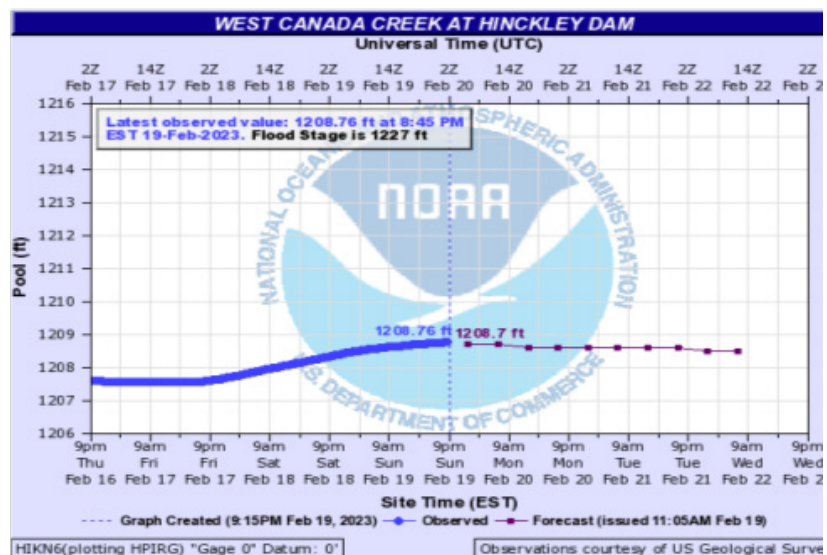
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To submit questions or comments about *The Bulletin*, contact editor John Harmon at [jpharmon1@gmail.com](mailto:jpharmon1@gmail.com)



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Goebel warns that “The lack of National Weather Service forecasting for Oneida Lake is unacceptable, given that almost all of the Oneida Lake tributaries are monitored with USGS stream flow gages and since the Canal Corporation monitors Oneida Lake water levels at four locations—Sylvan Beach, Cleveland, Brewerton, and at Lock E-23. There is more than sufficient data for the National Weather Service to implement forecasting for Oneida Lake water levels.”

As weather patterns change and climate change evolves, we are experiencing more severe and a greater number of weather events, such as rain bombs and extended periods of drought. In order to address the effects of these changes on the watershed, Governor Hochul and the NYS Legislature has tasked the Canal Corporation to chair the **Upstate Flood Mitigation Task Force**. Their mission is to “identify and recommend reasonable measures that can be taken to enhance flood management and mitigation along the Erie Canal.” Canal Corporation Director Brian Stratton chairs this committee.

According to their website, “The task force will explore the cost or impact of flooding along the Erie Canal over the last five years to agriculture, transportation, infrastructure, land use, public health, insurance, tourism, recreation, and power generation. In addition, the task force will assess the Canal system operation, procedures and plans that may impact flood mitigation and management and identify adaptive measures, with costs, that could be executed to mitigate flood damages. The task force will prepare a report by July 1, 2023, to publicly cite its findings.

“The task force is comprised of nine members including the Canal Corporation Director (chair), Commissioner of the Department of Transportation, Director of the Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Services, Commissioner of the Department of

Environmental Conservation, and five additional members – three appointed by Governor, one by the temporary president of the Senate, and one by the Assembly Speaker.”

The Oneida Lake Association is fortunate that we have voice on the committee. At its meeting on October 27, 2022, OLA President John Harmon had the opportunity to address the Task Force. In his remarks he stated:

“Speaking on behalf of the Oneida Lake Association, we understand that this is a very complex system, covering four different bodies of water. There are a couple features of Oneida Lake that are unique that I’d like to point out. First of all, we are the largest body of water in that system, with the greatest population. There are thousands and thousands of residents and businesses in this area. Also, Oneida Lake has a great economic engine. Millions and millions of dollars are generated by residents, businesses, and, of course, tourists who come to visit our lake. So I know that you will keep that in mind as you continue your work. One other feature that makes Oneida Lake unique is that it is an extremely shallow lake, compared to the other bodies of water in this study. As a result, the slightest change in water levels has an enormous and significant change in shoreline activity. For example, I live on Oneida Lake, and I have 100 feet of dock, and at the end of my dock it is two and a half feet deep. The slightest change in water level sends the shoreline way out if you’re lowering the lake. Or way up if water comes into the lake.

The last thing I’d like to mention is that this entire discussion has talked about water. But on Oneida Lake there is another W that is extremely important and just as significant—and that’s **Wind**. We’re a very shallow lake with an east-west chord, twenty plus miles. So when that wind blows out of the east or west,

which is usually the prevailing winds, a twenty mile fetch results in enormous wave action, coupled with the shallow shoreline. For example, last August when we had that difficult flooding event, our docks, were under water. When the sun came out, we didn’t pray for more sun. What we prayed for was no wind! Still water over the docks . . . we can deal with that. But once that wind blows up, that creates an enormous force. So please, as you’re doing your work, keep in mind that water is important, but wind is extremely important to us on Oneida Lake.”

The OLA Board of Directors clearly believes that during the deliberations of this Task Force, Oneida Lake must remain the “center of gravity.” Of course, we also understand that our needs must be balanced with those in other parts of the Owego River basin. But we cannot allow any one small part of the system to dictate what happens to largest inland lake in New York State. The OLA Board also calls upon its members to join us in this mission. The Upstate Flood Mitigation Task Force will hold public meetings prior to their final report and recommendation. We invite you to get involved whenever there is a call for input.

Finally, The OLA Board thanks Howard Goebel for his many years of service to our lake. His experience and expertise have helped keep our lake at an optimal level. We wish him all the best in his retirement!

### OLA Mission

The Mission of the Oneida Lake Association is to protect the fisheries, wildlife, and natural resources of Oneida Lake by promoting science-based conservation and management through education and outreach, in partnership with our members and local communities.

# A Man for All Oneida Lake Seasons: Don Therre

By Jack Henke

You can find longtime OLA member Don Therre on the water in any season. He loves the lake, he loves to fish, and his impressive angling knowledge reflects a deep-rooted passion for the sport. The retired steel fabricator grew up at Lower South Bay, where members of the Therre family have lived since 1893. The beneficiary of his father Donald and grandfather Gus's angling expertise, Don continually updates the techniques, lures, and equipment that contribute to his success.

To our benefit, Don shares his Oneida Lake knowledge. Check out his posts on the Diehards' and Anglers' Facebook pages. You won't need an imagination because he always includes photos of his most effective lures, with details about jigging methods and catch counts.

Asked about his philosophy, the accomplished angler stated: "I've been privileged to teach the lake's secrets to my children and grandchildren. If, by sharing information with others, I can help them create priceless memories, I'm happy. We have to make sure that future generations know how to experience Oneida Lake's incomparable fishing."

Don is also a fine photographer whose beautifully composed images capture the wonders of light and color that illuminate Oneida Lake's panorama. His work immerses viewers in a world that we too often take for granted.

The Therre family has been a part of the Oneida Lake scene for 130 years.



A Lower South Bay vista, captured by Don.

Don's great-grandparents, John and Crescentia, purchased property on Lower South Bay in 1893. By 1905, "Therre's Hotel" was a popular destination for vacationing Syracusans. Assisted by their four sons - John, Anthony, Gus, and Edward - the Therres also operated a boat livery and dancing pavilion. By 1930, the family added a roller-skating rink to their Lower South Bay resort, and a boat launch to their livery.

As American society changed, the Therres altered their holdings. They sold the hotel and pavilion in 1941, the roller rink in 1953. Don's parents, Donald and Barbara, established a bait/tackle shop in 1947, and also managed the livery and launch. They closed the livery and shop in 1996, but kept the launch open until 2008.

Born in 1954, Don matured in daily communion with Oneida Lake's rhythms. At the livery, he rented boats to early-rising anglers, bailed and cleaned watercraft, and repaired docks. In the bait shop, he counted crawlers, crabs, and bass bugs, packaged bait, stocked shelves, and sold hooks, sinkers, Dixie Spinners, and bucktail jigs aplenty. He answered the question, "Where they hittin'?" countless times. And whenever he interacted with anglers, Don Therre listened, a quality his elders imprinted into his character.

"My grandfather and father taught me to listen carefully," Don recalled. "Their stories about life on the lake fascinated me. They told me about the days before '911' when local folks were the only first responders to emergencies. Grampa Gus and my dad rescued many boaters in distress. People cared enough for others back then to risk their own lives."

The veteran Oneida Laker elaborated: "If anglers perfected their listening skills,



Don Therre shares angling's joy with granddaughter Rielle.

they'd catch more fish. When I was young, I paid close attention to what old timers said when they returned to our livery after a day's fishing. I listen carefully when experienced fishermen like Tony Buffa and Matt Gutches talk techniques. Reading Facebook posts can teach you a lot, too. Some anglers share info like I do, and that helps our entire fishing community."

If you don't see Don on the lake this summer, there's a good chance you'll find him at his Lower South Bay waterfront property, which he maintains for family outings and as headquarters for Oneida Lake's "Hobie Fleet 204." This sailing club's commodore, Bob Longo, commended his group's host: "Don is an awesome guy who has built a perfect environment for our catamarans. We've been here since 1998 and, every year, Don goes out of his way to make sure our needs are met. His enthusiasm for outdoor sports is contagious."

Because Don Therre cares deeply about Oneida Lake, he strongly supports the OLA. "The Association is our lake's only watchdog," Don mused. "Its leadership understands the important issues because they live on the lake or visit frequently. The OLA has the political clout to address these problems, and a concerned membership that supports actions to insure that my grandchildren will experience the Oneida Lake I know and love."

# ANNUAL MEETING - Preserve, Protect, and Provide

Join us at the Central Square High School Auditorium

April 26 - 6 pm

The OLA Board of Directors is pleased to announce that we will host our in-person Annual Meeting this spring. Doors open at 6 pm if you would like to see the exhibits. Check our website, Facebook page, and our e-newsletters for details.

## Agenda

7:00 pm	Welcome and flag salute	
7:05 pm	Business Meeting	
	Treasurer's report	Lance Vella
	Membership report	Bruce Schantz
	President's report	John Harmon
	Elections	Rip Colesante/Matt Snyder

## Presentations

Questions will follow at the end of each presentation (speakers subject to change.)

- 7:20 pm Oneida Fish Cultural Station Update  
Manager, Bill Evans
- 7:35 pm Shackleton Point Field Station Fisheries Report  
Coordinator of the Oneida Lake Fisheries Program, Tony Van De Valk
- 7:50 pm DEC Law Enforcement on Oneida Lake  
Expectations for 2023  
Division of Law Enforcement Assistant Director, Colonel Jim Boylan
- 8:05 pm Introduction: New appointee  
Senior Research Associate at the Shackleton Point Field Station, Zoe Almeida
- 8:20 pm Current Status of Cormorant Control Results from 2022  
NYSDEC Bureau Wildlife Chief, Jim Farquhar
- 8:35 pm 9 Element Plan: What does it mean for Oneida Lake? - Aaron McKeon
- 8:50 pm OLA 78th Conservationist of the Year Award - Matt Snyder
- 9:00 pm **Drawings:** Take a Kid Fishing tackle kits, Bluebird House, Four \$25 gift cards to Bass Pro from Tow Boat US, Kayak from Gander Outdoors and a WiFi Action Camera! **Must be present to win!**

## Notice of Elections

By recommendation of the Oneida Lake Association Board of Directors Nominating Committee and unanimous vote of the full Board of Directors, the following OLA Directors are nominated for re-election to terms expiring April 30, 2026: William Alexander, Ryan Asmus, Mike Barretta, Gina Duggleby, Rowland Hrywnak, Dr. Edward Mills, George Reck, and Bruce Schantz. In accord with OLA bylaws, the election will be conducted by voice vote of members in good standing, who are present in person at the Annual Meeting.

## Annual Meeting Committee

Tony Buffa MC, John Harmon, Rip Colesante, Ed Mills, Warren Darby, Matt Snyder, and Ryan Asmus

## The Chain Pickerel of Oneida Lake

By Tony VanDeValk, Research Support Specialist, Cornell Biological Field Station

During the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the chain pickerel rivaled the walleye as the top piscivore in Oneida Lake. Early records suggest pickerel were as abundant as walleye. High lake levels each spring due to snow melt provided spawning and nursery habitats for esocids (chain pickerel and northern pike). Chain pickerel ranked fifth in Oneida Lake angler sport fish preference behind smallmouth bass, walleye, largemouth bass and yellow perch during this time.

The completion of the New York State Barge Canal system had a dramatic impact on the ecology of Oneida Lake. Oneida Lake became part of the canal system in 1917 which resulted in lake level stabilization and the draining of marshes for development. The installation of gates at the Caughdenoy Dam in 1952 lowered the sill at the lake's outlet which allowed winter draw down and virtually eliminated spring flooding as well as exposing nearshore vegetated areas to ice scour. These two related events

resulted in the loss of habitats necessary for esocid reproduction. Subsequently, the chain pickerel population declined, and the walleye became the predominant piscivore with the smallmouth bass a distant second. Once a popular Oneida Lake sport fish, the chain pickerel was no longer a major component of the angler's creel.

The chain pickerel population has increased since the late 1990s. From 1957 through 1997, catches of age-1 and older chain pickerel in trap-net surveys were rare. Beginning in 1998, catches increased slowly through 2012 followed by a 6-year period of relatively high catches and then a return to levels observed before 2013. The increase that started in 1998 is likely due to the arrival of zebra mussels in the early 1990s which led to increased water clarity and expansion of submerged aquatic vegetation into deeper areas of the lake. These vegetated areas provide important spawning and nursery habitat for chain pickerel. Age-0 chain



*OLA member Troy McMullen recently pulled this monster pickerel through the ice on Oneida Lake. 7.7 lbs!*

pickerel have been caught in seines in 7 of the 16 years surveyed since 2004.

This esocid now offers angling opportunities that were not available for decades, but anglers have been reluctant to target this species. Creel surveys conducted since 2011 indicate less than 1% of the 9,100 angling parties interviewed included pickerel as one of their targeted species despite angler catch rates increasing from 0.0/angler-hour for most years prior to 2010 to as high as 0.40/angler-hour in more recent years (mean since 2011 = 0.17/angler-hour).

Chain pickerel can be an important part of the fish community, especially when abundant. A diet study conducted from 2016-2018 indicated chain pickerel diets were dominated by young yellow perch and crayfish early in the summer and transitioned to young gizzard shad as they became available later in the season. The round goby which colonized the lake in 2014 also contributed to pickerel diets throughout the summer. Other fish appearing in pickerel diets included inshore species like bullheads, sunfish, killifish and young black bass (largemouth and smallmouth). Chain pickerel growth is good in Oneida Lake as most fish reach the minimum harvest length of 15 inches by age-4. By age-7, pickerel average around 24 inches.

While it remains uncertain whether Oneida's chain pickerel population will again attain the high abundances observed in the mid-2010s, existing spawning and nursery habitats are likely adequate to maintain a population capable of sustaining a sport fishery for anglers to enjoy.

## Oswego County Sheriff Marine Patrol Ready for Another Boating Season on Oneida Lake

By Kate Davis

Oswego County Sheriff's Office is looking forward to resuming public safety patrols in cooperation with other local law enforcement agencies in the upcoming 2023 summer boating season on Oneida Lake. The Marine Patrol Unit is responsible for marine enforcement and rescue activities on all of the county's numerous waterways. The unit also responds to emergencies 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The Sheriff's Office serves the Oneida Lake area as well as Oneida River and the canal system all the way to Lake Ontario. Officers regularly patrol for safety issues and enforcement but also are on the lookout for preventing property damage due to wakes and unsafe speed.

New additions to patrol functions in 2023 are two jet skis that will be deployed this summer to bolster police presence on the lake and river. The jet skis join the three watercrafts already in service for the agency: a 24' Boston Whaler, a 25' Parker, and a 20' Boston Whaler. The 24' Whaler is typically on duty on Oneida Lake all summer and the other two boats are available for patrol when and where needed. The boats

*(Continued on page 9)*



# The Oneida Lake Business Profile

## Lakeside Outfitters

By OLA Director Matt Snyder

*The Oneida Lake Business Profile is a regular feature in the Oneida Lake Bulletin to showcase businesses that serve Oneida Lake Association members. For this issue, OLA Director Matt Snyder interviewed staff of Lakeside Outfitters.*

### **What does your business do, and whom do you serve?**

We are a locally owned and operated fishing outfitter that offers Oneida Lake anglers a full-service experience. We serve anglers pursuing all species across all seasons. A stop into Lakeside might include purchasing newly released gear, Oneida Lake specific tackle, hard to find tackle from Japanese companies, or a huge selection of ice fishing gear and bait. Owners Jeff Tornabene and Scott Masucci, along with employees including Josh Chenel and Sean Depoala, are always willing to offer advice on where to fish and what to use. They are usually good for any conversation regarding Oneida Lake and its past and present.

### **What is your main connection to Oneida Lake?**

The Oneida Lake winters have played a huge role in shaping Lakeside Outfitters. We see ice fishermen from many areas of the country. On a typical Saturday morning during ice season, 300 customers will walk through the doors. Although the early spring slows down, the shop stays busy making custom lures crafted and painted by Tornabene and Chenel. During the summer we see Bass anglers that stop to get gear for major tournament fishing, as well as our local walleye anglers. Our fall customer base consists of walleye anglers, bass anglers and people excited for ice fishing.

“Lakeside” as many customers have nicknamed the business, stays active in the Oneida Lake community not only by offering fishing services, but also by hosting events related to fishing, supporting local fishing clubs in both Syracuse and

Rochester, and donating to and working closely with groups like Ducks Unlimited, The Shane Pinar Future Fishermen’s Foundation, The Oneida Lake Wednesday Night Walleye League, the derby formerly run by the Lions Club, and much more.

### **Tell us about the history of your business.**

In Fall 2018, an opportunity arose between friends to establish a fishing outfitter in Canastota. At first, the identity of Lakeside Outfitters was unclear, but the vision was there. Owners Tornabene and Masucci did not want the typical bait shop that might have pegboard walls, out of date lures, and tackle you can find in any Big Box store.

As business started becoming steady, Jeff and Scott were able to invest any earnings back into the vision for the business. Lakeside Outfitters now prides itself on being one of the premier fishing Outfitters, not only on Oneida Lake, but on the East Coast and hopefully, soon, nation-wide. Offering the highest end equipment to anglers has allowed the business to grow and exceed their goals and expectations. As of the Fall of 2022, Lakeside Outfitters was able to acquire ownership of The Tackle Trap, another well-known business that specializes in Bass fishing and offers unique services including reel repair and customization. Featuring the newly launched online store, [www.tackletrap.com](http://www.tackletrap.com), this



### **Lakeside Outfitters**

**Address:** 3279 State Route 31  
Canastota, NY 13032

**Phone:** 315-633-6030

**Email:** lakesideoutfitters3279@gmail.com

**Online:** tackletrap.com and rotjaw.com

**Opened:** 2018

**Employees:** 7

**Proprietors:** Jeff Tornabene and Scott Masucci

new collaboration between the former Tackle Trap organization and Lakeside Outfitters will offer anglers hard to find, higher-end tackle and gear that cannot be found in most stores, along with the staples of fishing.

### **Are you seeing any changes, trends, or issues on Oneida Lake?**

Overall, we believe that the health of the Lake is in a good state. We hope that the deciding powers on limits of walleye have made the right choices and we understand that they are trying to avoid a crash of baitfish and have learned lessons from other fisheries like Lake Huron.

It will always be necessary to be vigilant and protect Oneida Lake’s water quality from issues like pollution from runoff and other factors. We hope that the scientific expertise from Cornell and SUNY ESF can continue to be leveraged to help our community preserve water quality, fishability, and overall boating and water activities on the Lake.

*OLA extends its thanks to Lakeside Outfitters for participating in the Oneida Lake Business Profile.*

*Do you have an idea for a business to feature? Let us know by e-mailing [snyder.matthew.r@gmail.com](mailto:snyder.matthew.r@gmail.com).*



launch out of and dock at Winter Harbor Marina in Brewerton, a partnership that is greatly appreciated by Sheriff Don Hilton and the officers who patrol local waterways.

Both Boston Whalers have side scan sonar to assist in recovery or sunken vessels, like a 4-wheeler that goes through the ice, for instance. The forward looking infrared (FLIR) thermal imaging equipment is on both the Parker and the 20' Whaler. The benefit of having this type of imaging on the vessel is that it turns night into day and during the day, allows officers to see clearly through smoke, fog and even solar glare.

At Maximum deployment, the Marine Unit employs 1 full-time sergeant, 3 full-time deputies, as well as 4 part-time officers plus 4 additional seasonal officers who undergo the same training as the Marine Unit deputies. Sergeant Mark Walton heads up the Marine Patrol and is pleased to be part of the law enforcement collaboration managing safety on the lake. "We have an unusual situation here because the lake is bordered by 4 different counties so jurisdiction can be tricky. Anyone who uses the lake on summer weekends know how busy the lake can be, and that presents some challenges. The collaboration between the different Sheriff's Offices, the State Police and local municipalities is top-notch and makes the lake as safe as possible," said Sergeant Walton.

All officers assigned to the Sheriff's Marine Unit must possess a safety certificate issued by the State of New York, train in water rescue and water survival, boater safety, vessel operations/maintenance and personal watercraft operations. All officers go through a marine law enforcement and marine operator course in Lake George for two weeks before being designated as a Marine Unit officer.

## News from the Oneida Lake Fish Hatchery

When we think of the fish hatchery in Constantia, we often think of the great work they do preparing fingerling walleyes for stocking in Oneida Lake. As we tour the facility, we also marvel at the sturgeon program, as well as some of their other projects.

But what about Tiger Muskies? That's a species that might seem new to many of us. Hatchery manager, Bill Evans, explained that "The New York State Tiger Musky Program has been moved from South Otselic Hatchery to the Oneida Hatchery, so we will be raising the state's quota of Tiger Musky which is around 100,000 nine-inch fish each year." (Tiger Muskies are a hybrid cross between Muskellunge and Northern Pike). "Since our tanks are longer and shallower than the South Otselic tanks, we have had to build 'jump screens' that sit on the tank walls to prevent the fish from jumping out."

Evans continued, "Another in-house project has been the 'Tiger Trees.' This is an artificial cover to promote stacking below the feeders. Fish waiting below the feeders are more likely to have food fall within striking range compared to those along the outside walls of the tanks. This practice promotes better growth.

"The first trial for this year looked promising while fish were smaller, but growth and mortality seems to even out as fish get larger. We plan on continuing the experiment for another three years before evaluating definitively."

Part of the study compared the growth difference between those fish utilizing the "Trees" with the control group of fish that had no trees in the tanks. For this preliminary year of study, there was very little growth difference. However, there was a substantial difference in mortality rate during a disease outbreak. Evans stated that, "It's



Evans explained, "You can see how the fish take to the cover below the feeders and are not up against the tank walls."

hard to say the mortality difference was not affected by the trees. The thought is without the trees, the fish use themselves for cover and are closer and more prone to nip each other. Biting is the key factor in spreading *columnaris* among esocids [pike and pickerel] in a hatchery, so this idea fits. We had a drought year this year and battled with low oxygen, which you would think would affect all the fish the same. Did the trees provide stress relief and lower the cumulative effects of stress so when disease hit, they were able to combat it more effectively? Hard to say. Hopefully, we won't have any more episodes like that. The study, as a whole, will encompass several years. To try to speculate much from the first year seems a bit premature."

The Oneida Hatchery no longer stocks any walleye other than fry. The 50-day program was cut in 2020 which allowed room for the Tiger Musky program. Evans assured us that "we still send fry to South Otselic and Chautauqua Hatcheries for pond fingerling grow out. And Lake Sturgeon are still in production here, and we are slated to raise 10,000 Cisco for Keuka Lake."

The OLA appreciates the great work of Bill Evans and his staff as they continued to raise generations of game fish!



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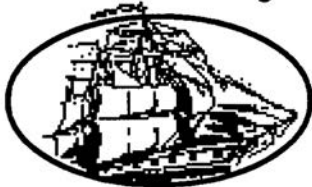
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