

Skaneateles Lake Watershed Wave Reviews

Winter 2023 Edition

Visit the Skaneateles Lake website
for resources and tips on how
to protect the water quality of
Skaneateles Lake
www.skanlakeinfo.org

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*Brought to you by the City of
Syracuse Department of Water
Ben Walsh, Mayor*

Have you visited the Gatehouse Garden lately?

By: Camille Marcotte, Cornell Cooperative Extension Onondaga County

This June, CCE Onondaga staff and Master Gardener volunteers, along with GoNative! perennials worked to restore the rain garden in front of the City of Syracuse Gatehouse building at 20 West Genesee Street in Skaneateles. The garden was originally installed in 2010 by Master Gardener volunteers and had suffered a lack of maintenance and care. The garden was restored with a diverse array of native plants and wildflowers, attracting pollinators (like Monarchs) and helping to soak up runoff from the building's roof.

Hopefully, this demonstration rain garden will provide guidance, support, and inspiration for all who stop by to experience its beauty! Plant identification tags were installed to offer examples of different native plants that do well in rain gardens. Additional outreach will be coming in 2024!

A huge thank you to Janice Wiles and the GoNative! team, and Master Gardeners Joy Pople, Judy Cowden, Emily Adams, Mike Fixler, and Carol Jerosé for their help and support with growing plants, providing mulch and supplies, weeding, planting, and watering the garden! Also, a big thank you to the City of Syracuse for financially supporting this project and providing a hose to keep our plants hydrated!



Gatehouse Garden before (left) and after (right) restoration

The Skaneateles Watershed Education Program works to protect the water quality of Skaneateles Lake, a treasured resource that serves as the primary drinking water source for Skaneateles and the City of Syracuse. The City of Syracuse has funded this program since its inception in 1996.

Cornell Cooperative Extension
Onondaga County



Steep Slope Erosion Control Project

By: Kendra Pearson, Central New York Land Trust

The Central New York Land Trust (CNYLT) continues its riparian restoration and steep slope erosion mitigation work in Spafford. This is the largest riparian zone restoration project ever undertaken in the Skaneateles Lake watershed by the CNYLT, encompassing 93.38 acres of previously logged and damaged land.

After the first round of native tree and shrub planting, the CNYLT is finalizing their own mix of native grass and wildflower seeds to help stabilize the steep slope and provide habitat and forage for wildlife. The mix includes Big Bluestem, Partridge Pea, Autumn Bentgrass, Purple Coneflower, and Canada Wildrye. “This combination of quick growing plants, trees and shrubs will give us the best chance to hold back the highly erodible soil,” says Paul Porter, Director of Stewardship.

Riparian zones are biodiverse areas adjacent to bodies of water, and serve as important lines of defense for lakes, rivers and streams. Tree and plant root masses form a complex filtration system that removes excess nutrients and contaminants before they can enter bodies of water. Riparian zones are also temperature regulators, keeping water cool and lake temperatures consistent. This is good news for the residents of Central New York reliant upon Skaneateles Lake for their drinking water.



Top: Spafford riparian zone before restoration
Bottom: Spafford riparian zone one year after restoration work began

Cover Crop Drone Seeding Project

By: Eric Jensen, Onondaga County Soil and Water Conservation District

Beginning August 21st, the Skaneateles Lake Watershed Ag Program (SLWAP) contracted with Auburn Ag Products to apply over 16,500 pounds of annual ryegrass cover crop seed on over 660 acres of standing corn silage fields in the Skaneateles Lake watershed. We used a large Hyllo AG-130 drone with a hopper/spreader capable of applying seed on 0.8 acres per flight. The cover crop seeding project is in the first year of a 3-year NYS Climate Resiliency Farming grant. Eight Skaneateles Lake watershed farms volunteered to test this technology for the project. Advancing drone technology has promising uses on the farm - the new models of drones will increase capacity and dramatically improve efficiency.

Annual ryegrass is shade tolerant, so it will germinate and establish under the canopy of corn leaves. It has a successful history of being applied by aircraft in the Midwest about 6 weeks before the crop is harvested. Rainy weather conditions can delay corn harvest or delay cover crop planting after the corn harvest. Without cover crop protection, the soil is vulnerable to erosion from storm and spring runoff events during the dormant season.

The agricultural fields selected for this project are in high priority watersheds of Skaneateles Lake that have a high impact on the drinking water quality of over 200,000 residents. Planting cover crops with drone technology will quickly establish a ‘green carpet’ of growing plants providing enhanced protection for this great resource. Cover crops also increase infiltration of water into the soil to reduce storm water runoff from fields, and improve overall soil health by increasing soil aggregates and organic matter. This is a win-win for farms and the environment!

Emergency Work in the Skaneateles Watershed

By: Mark E. Burger, Onondaga County Soil and Water Conservation District

On April 5 and April 26, the northern portion of the watershed received a high-intensity, two-inch, two-year rainfall event. This occurred on already saturated soils, which caused substantial runoff events from farm fields, forests, and stream overflow in the watershed.



The Skaneateles Lake Watershed Ag Program (SLWAP) staff and Watershed Coordinator Rich Abbott immediately sprang into action. The team met with landowners and farmers in the affected areas. Emergency plans were developed and meetings were held with the City's Watershed Agricultural Program Review Committee (WAPRC) Board of Directors (BOD) to review the technical merits of the emergency work. Meetings were held with the Onondaga County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) BOD to release funding to address the technical work approved by the WAPRC.

SLWAP staff put the work out to bid to contractors immediately with the caveat that all projects had to be done within one week of the site showing. Only contractors that could work within that tight timeline were considered.



Projects were implemented immediately followed by the SWCD critical area seeding crew. They immediately seeded and mulched the exposed soil with the goal of getting roots in the ground as quick as possible to help hold the soil together, knowing that summer storms would hit the area hard, as they always do from June through August.

Unfortunately, an extremely dry weather pattern hit the area and no appreciable rainfall occurred over a three week period. Therefore, the SLWAP staff and their summer crew sprang into action and hauled water in a 250 gallon cube to each job site and watered the site with portable pumps. The goal was to make sure that vegetation was growing and roots were substantially in the ground to help hold the newly exposed soil together.

The plan worked great and all emergency work has been on schedule. Please see the before and after photos and captions that explain the work that has been done.

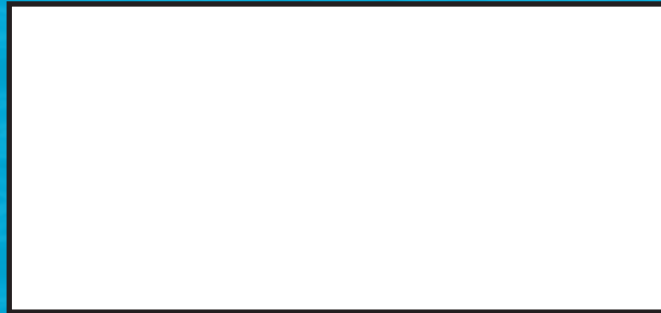
Many thanks to the City of Syracuse for having a dedicated staff to address matters like this in the watershed over the last 29 years! Please know that this work would not and could not have happened without direct funding from the City of Syracuse! Over \$20 million has been invested over the past 29 years to protect the City's drinking water supply for Syracuse at Skaneateles Lake!

*Top: Live stakes for Shotwell Brook pot hole wetlands planting
Bottom: Watering new seedlings at wetland sites*

CCE Onondaga
6505 Collamer Road,
East Syracuse, NY
13057

Skaneateles Lake Wave Reviews

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List serve accessible through this direct link <http://eepurl.com/bQ22XP> or by visiting our website at www.cceonondaga.org and searching for our 'Skaneateles Lake' landing page.

Don't forget to check out the new Skaneateles Lake Watershed website at www.skanelakeinfo.org

Important Contacts for the Skaneateles Watershed

Cayuga County Health Department 315-253-1405
Cayuga County Soil & Water Conservation District 315-252-4171
Cornell Cooperative Extension of Onondaga County 315-424-9485
Cortland County Health Department 607-753-5036
Cortland County Soil & Water Conservation District 607-756-5991
NYS DEC Region 7 Environmental Permits (Onondaga & Cayuga) 315-426-7438
NYS DEC Region 7 Environmental Permits Sub-office (Cortland) 607-753-3095
NYS DEC Spill Prevention and Response 800-457-7362
NYS DEC Region 7 Water & Wastewater (Stormwater, Dam Safety, Flood Control) 315-426-7500
Onondaga County Health Department 315-435-3252
Onondaga County Soil & Water Conservation District 315-457-0325
Skaneateles Lake Watershed Agricultural Program 315-457-0325
Syracuse Water Department (Skaneateles) 315-448-8366

This newsletter was created by Camille Marcotte of Cornell Cooperative Extension Onondaga County and Rich Abbott, City of Syracuse Water Dept. Special thank you to our partnering contributors.

Skaneateles Lake Watershed Education Program

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If you need special assistance, please contact our office at 315-424-9485.*