CHAUTAUQUA LAKE ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

VOLUNTEER PROJECTS

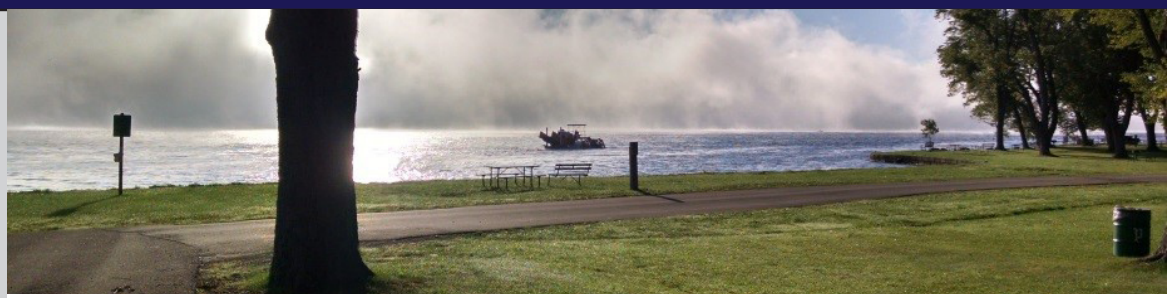
WELFARE TO WORK

The CLA partnered with NYS and participated in the Welfare to Work program once again. This program provided 376 hours of volunteer service. Participants worked on the barge crews, alongside CLA employees, cleaning the shores of Chautauqua Lake.

NO SINGLE ACTION ALONE WILL MANAGE ALGAE!

Reducing the inflow of nutrients is believed to be the achievable action that can be taken to reduce the level of nutrients in Chautauqua Lake. Such actions include:

Reducing storm water runoff, Reducing sediment inflow from tributaries, Removing phosphorus and nitrogen from sewer plant discharges, and Improving/ eliminating near-lake and tributary septic systems.



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A CHALLENGING YEAR

A perfect summer... hot days, beautiful sunsets, happy residents, and visitors using our wonderful lake. That is what the CLA likes to see and hear; that is what we strive for.

However, it wasn't all smiles for the CLA this summer. We experienced unusual weed patterns and excessive growth in the middle-to-upper end of Chautauqua Lake in July. In fact, the CLA removed more aquatic vegetation in 2016 than in 2014 and 2015 combined... over three million pounds more to be exact!

Residents were not completely satisfied due to the abundance of weed growth in many areas. Lower water levels also made it difficult (nearly impossible in some areas) for our equipment to maneuver around docks and shores. Nature is unpredictable. We need to be flexible and accommodating as best we can to meet the needs of the lake and its users. We feel that is something we accomplished to the best of our abilities.

The CLA maintained three (3) crews, eight (8) hours a day, five (5) days a week for the summer. We managed to service the entire lake several times. Plus, we focused on problematic areas as they arose. Our service is an aid to local homeowners and lake users. We cut navigational lanes and cleared waterways for the safety of all lake users, we helped with shoreline clean-up, and we arranged roadside pick-up in several areas to further assist residents.

As Labor Day approached and our young crews returned to school, our harvesting ceased as it does each fall. We budget annually for a 14-week harvesting season. We strive to maintain a balanced budget and provide service within our means. Our annual operating budget is compiled of three parts: Governmental assistance, foundation grants and member donations, and fundraisers. A decrease in any one of these components prevents us from reaching our service goals.

We continually research new funding opportunities to help with this annual concern. Contributions can be made via PayPal or Credit Card on our website.

“A Clean Lake is Everyone’s Business!”

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

Chautauqua Lake with its 42 plus miles of shoreline represents many things to each of us. When thinking of the lake or talking with individuals around the area, you quickly begin to recognize the emotional, passionate bond that each of us attach to its blue waters. Few things posed to a lakefront landowner evoke such an animated discussion as the question, “do you have a weed problem?” The lake is an economic resource of substantial magnitude as well. Inside the “ring” of Routes 430 and 394 there is in excess of 5 Billion Dollars of assessed property valuation, generating tens of millions of dollars in property tax and sales tax revenue. It is the lifeblood of our county’s economic wellbeing.

From a scientific point our lake is complex beyond imagination. Affected by watershed runoff, nutrient loading, seasonal water temperatures, ice cover, tributary runoff, invasive species, cloud cover, wind, lake levels and millions of years of decayed plant growth on the lakebed floor, it is enough to make your head spin. And each of these factors changes every year – or maybe every day or month, in different degrees, contributing to shall we say “net recreational water quality”.

While the North end of the lake saw relatively pristine waters with heavy weed growth which was managed for most of the summer, the lower basin was problematic and less than desirable in water quality. When the Chautauqua Lake Association cutters came off the lake in the middle of August due to lack of funding, it did not take long for the unchecked weed growth to recover. With recreational boat use and wind, weeds quickly piled into the shore, combining with a late season algae bloom and turned large areas of the shoreline into what would best be described as……a mess.

So the 5 Billion Dollar question is “What can we do?” We, as the Chautauqua Lake Association, need more. More help. More money. As we go forward with our 2017 plans to continue lake maintenance, we are looking to build out initiatives’ around a longer service season, more shoreline cleanup, and dredging opportunities where they can be permitted.

We would ask that you consider increasing your level of support. When the opportunity arises--- please voice a request to your local officials to support the Chautauqua Lake Association in substantially larger amounts. Most of all, we would like to express our thanks and humble gratitude for your past support- both individual and corporate, that of the foundations without whose support we would cease to exist, and the governmental agencies that fund and work with us on a day to day basis. Together we can work to solve the 5 billion dollar question.

Respectfully,

Paul O. Stage CFP
CLA President

Find us on Facebook

Lake Fact:

We contract annually with a biologist to monitor and assess plant conditions and herbivores. NYS utilizes water quality samples that we collect in their decision making processes. The DEC and Health Departments utilize our Harmful Algal Bloom monitoring program data for lake use advisory decision making.

We actively participate with NYSPRISM. Interns were here this summer surveying tributaries for water chestnut and other AIS. We are constantly updating our web site and Facebook page so they can be a resource to the community.

Chautauqua Lake Association, Inc.

BOAT STEWARD PROGRAM LAUNCHED

Thanks to a generous NYSDEC grant the CLA launched year one of a three year boat steward program, developing public outreach and awareness for invasive species in our area to prevent the transfer of these plants.

Over 4,300 boaters arriving from various locations across the country were approached in 2016 during the short summer season. Our stewards were stationed at public launches around Chautauqua Lake plus Cassadaga Lake and Bear Lake. Boaters were briefly approached and asked a few questions. They were then provided with information on the spread of aquatic vegetation and their watercraft was visually inspected. This was all voluntary. If boaters were not interested in participating they were not questioned. The majority of the boaters were happy to participate.

Our primary goal is to prevent the spread of AIS both from entering our precious lakes and from being transported to other lakes nearby.

Lake Fact:

The Bemus Point-Stow Ferry has been in continuous operation since 1811! In that year, Chautauqua County granted Thomas Bemus a license to operate such a vessel as a commercial enterprise. Early versions of the ferry were little more than rafts, first rowed or poled and later hand-pulled by rope to transport supplies & livestock across the narrows. Later refinements included hand cranks to propel the ferry. In 1902, Alton Ball, having just recently assumed ownership of the ferry service, installed a steel cable and steam engine. Imagine, the ferry was in operation over 90 years before it had any mechanical power !! The completion of the Veterans' Memorial Bridge in 1982 made the ferry obsolete as the essential sole method of cross lake passage. However, it remains in operation during the summer months for all to enjoy and to recall its place in our glorious lake history.

SCIENTIFIC CORNER

Lake condition monitoring continues to be the backbone of our being able to understand Chautauqua Lake's environmental health. This year we have continued to monitor aquatic plant growth which the Chautauqua Lake and Watershed Management Plan recommends be undertaken. The monitoring starts in the spring and continues through late fall. 2015's monitoring evidenced the presence of 24 different species of submerged aquatic plants with only 4 being invasive in nature. This diversity is unique to most lakes and helps to explain why Chautauqua Lake sports a very productive fishery. Managing plant control methods so as not to disrupt this diversity thus becomes an important undertaking.

Water Chestnut

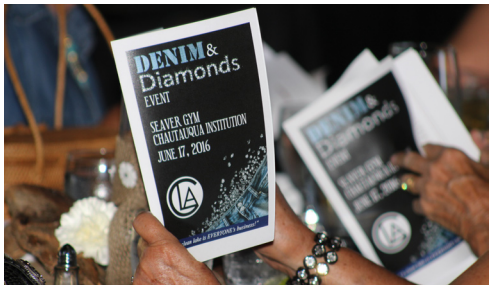
Of serious concern is that fact that the invasive Hydrilla and Water Chestnut are in nearby waters and could thus find their way here. Water Chestnut plants were discovered here in 2015 and were removed. None have been found this year. Hydrilla has yet to be observed here.

Monitoring staff also catalogs herbivore activity and mussel presence. The reduction of the Eurasian Watermilfoil invasive plant has been attributed to the activity of the moth, weevil and caddis fly herbivores. Native mussels also appear to be on the return while the zebra mussel population is constantly changing. No invasive quagga mussels have been found to date.

Hydrilla

We are also now approaching our 30th year of participation in the Citizens Statewide Lake Assessment Program. This program monitors lake water quality parameters and is responsible for gauging progress towards TMDL actions that are intended to mitigate the lake's nutrient impaired status.

2016 Ice Pick



2016 Denim and Diamonds Gala

2016 Dragon Boat Race

2016 EVENTS AND FUNDRAISERS

We kicked off 2016 with our annual Ice Pick Fundraiser. Friends and residents guess online the day and time they think the ice will break and the ice pick will fall into Bemus Bay. The warm weather this winter made for a short but exciting event!

We also participated in the annual Lake Rally sponsored by Chautauqua County Planning Department, Conservation Day involving over 1,500 students county-wide, and the Chautauqua Bird, Tree and Garden Club's Lake Walk Program.

In June we successfully hosted our first Denim and Diamonds Gala. This fundraising event was a celebration of the lake. The gala was a fun way for the CLA to let its supporters know how much they are appreciated. Watch for spring flyers and information for 2017! We plan to hold this as an annual event and would love to see you there next year.

Another victorious Light the Lake on the Fourth of July with over 12,000 flares lighting the shorelines of Chautauqua Lake. August marked the first ever Dragon Boat Race on Chautauqua Lake. If you haven't seen a dragon boat race it's a MUST! Over 20 teams battled their way across the finish lines. Visit our website or Facebook page for more information and pictures. We will be taking 2017 registrations & sponsorships soon.

Once again CLA staff and board members attended the NYS Federation of Lakes Annual Conference (NYSFOLA), the WNY NYSFOLA Conference and we are considering another trip to the North American Lake Management Society's (NALMS) Annual Conference in Banff, Canada. We are also a member of the Chautauqua Lake and Watershed Management Alliance.

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The CLA is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization.

Our 2016 Fund Drive remains $23,500 short of reaching the goal needed to balance the budget. Your year-end contribution can make a difference. To help our cause, you can make a donation on our website or by calling our office!

For more information about the CLA, visit us online at chautauqualakeassociation.org or call 716-763- 8602.

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