



<https://www.otsegolakeassociation.org/>

<https://www.facebook.com/Otsego-Lake-Association-Cooperstown-NY-1066851160050413/>

## OTSEGO LAKE ASSOCIATION WINTER UPDATE 2024

*Highlights of What's Happening in and Around Otsego Lake this Winter*

### **Embankment Failures on NYS Route 80**

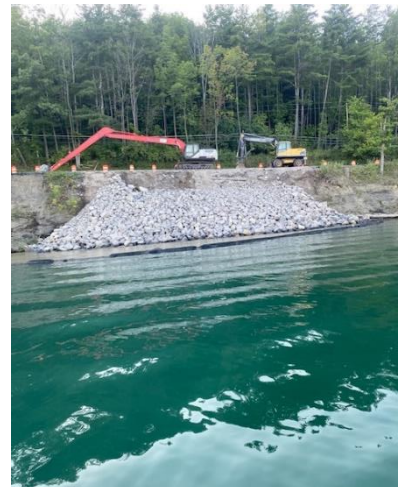
Two embankment failures along NYS Route 80 on the westerly side of Otsego Lake occurred this past year. The first one in July 2023 south of Five Mile Point and the second one in



*Bank failure, July 2023*

December 2023 north of Three Mile Point. They were probably caused by the heavy rains in the summer and fall that washed away the rather shallow soil cover that sits on top of the shale bedrock in those locations. In addition, there is a lot of high speed, heavy truck traffic along that highway and rather poor surface water drainage all along the roadway. After the first embankment failure, the NYS

Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) began maintaining one-way, alternating traffic to keep vehicles away from the edge of the highway. Shortly after the first embankment occurred, NYSDOT started dumping heavy stone rip-rap between the asphalt pavement and the lake to stabilize the area. This rip-rap has created an "eye sore" along that section of the shore of Otsego Lake. This appears to be NYSDOT's long-term solution to the problem rather than constructing a retaining wall like what was done at some other locations along this highway. Since the second embankment failure just occurred in late December, the NYSDOT has once again been maintaining one-way, alternating traffic to keep vehicles away from the edge of the highway. At this point, the NYSDOT has not started any work to address this second embankment failure such as



*NYSDOT dumping rip-rap.*

dumping heavy stone rip-rap or constructing a retaining wall. The Otsego Lake Association has been in contact with the NYSDOT to set up a meeting to discuss these embankment failures and request information on how they plan to address the second embankment failure and how they plan to prevent future failures. The NYSDOT really needs to evaluate the entire length of Route 80 along Otsego Lake and develop a comprehensive plan to address the surface water drainage and the high speed, heavy truck traffic. Without this comprehensive plan and actual implementation, additional embankment failures will occur.

### **O.L.A. Forms NYS Route 80 Otsego Lake Partners team to work with NYSDOT after second Shoulder Collapse and Lane Closure**

In November 2023 OLA sent a letter to NYSDOT asking for their commitment to a healthy Otsego Lake and safe drinking water, it began: The Otsego Lake Association (OLA) requests that the New York State Department of Transportation employ design, construction, repair and maintenance practices that will stop pollution of Otsego Lake from road runoff. OLA also requests that projects enhance the natural and historic beauty of Otsego Lake. This can be best achieved by obtaining timely input from Otsego Lake stakeholders such as OLA and by adhering to local laws concerning land use requirements along the lake shore. Every project that NYSDOT has on NYS Route 80 along the shore of Otsego Lake should be viewed as an opportunity to improve public safety, not just with road improvements, but also through intelligent environmental construction to protect this valuable public drinking water supply. A first NYSDOT letter provided a partial response to our questions, then a second letter informed us officially of the second shoulder collapse and lane closure. The NYSDOT Regional Directors Office contacted us to discuss our concerns. Anyone familiar with the Otsego Lake section of NYS Route 80 knows that it is in disrepair and has many areas vulnerable to failure and is potentially unsafe. Since there is no master plan for improvements, each failure is handled on an emergency basis without stakeholder or community involvement. The OLA is forming a team of concerned Lake Partners to address Route 80 issues and work with NYSDOT. We will develop realistic goals that reflect local concerns. A master plan is needed to guide projects and resolve these difficult, sensitive, and expensive problems in an environmentally sensitive manner. NYSDOT has agreed to meet with us this spring and there is also a goal to hold a public meeting in the early summer. If you want to be involved or have suggestions, please forward them to [info@otsegolakeassociation.org](mailto:info@otsegolakeassociation.org). Thank you! (Update by Betty VanHeusen)

## **Harmful Algae Blooms**

**What is being done to study HABS and implications for the future.**

### **Otsego Lake Watershed Supervisory Committee**

The Otsego Lake Watershed Supervisory Committee (WSC) was established by the Village of Cooperstown under New York State Law and is a cooperative effort between the Towns of Middlefield, Otsego, Springfield and the Village of Cooperstown. The WSC is dedicated to protecting the health of Otsego Lake, public health, its tributaries and the watershed.

Meetings are held monthly or bi-monthly at the Cooperstown Village Hall and are open to the public. Notices of the meetings are on the Village calendar. Al Keck serves as the Inspector for septic systems in the Lake's watershed. Charged with the responsibility of protecting the water quality of the Lake, the WSC has supervised thousands of septic inspections over the years and routinely inspects the 374 septic systems in the watershed. In its regulatory role, the WSC assists in issuing permits for hundreds of new and upgraded systems.

The recent Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) and other threats to the Lake have enhanced the WSC's responsibilities for the watershed as outlined in the law.

Last year, all three towns and the Village jointly funded the position of a Scientific Advisor, Dr. Kiyoko Yokota, a professor from SUNY Oneonta, as a consultant for the WSC. The Village and its Mayor serve as the WSC's primary administrative and political contact when dealing with New York State (NYS).

The WSC is looking forward to working with organizations and town governments in our community who have interest in developing a comprehensive watershed plan, also known as a 9-Element Plan. A NYS Department of State grant was applied for and received approval, with the Village of Cooperstown as the administrator. It will be a robust team effort.

The WSC has collaborated with partners over the past year to begin the work involved in developing a comprehensive watershed plan. This advance work was accomplished by a dedicated group, including colleagues at the Biological Field Station; SUNY Oneonta; the Towns of Otsego, Middlefield and Springfield; Otsego County Conservation Association, Otsego County Soil and Water District and the Otsego Lake Association. This work will serve as a foundation for the full comprehensive plan that is developed for our watershed and includes developing water quality measures, advancing testing, and installing radar stations and gauges.

The comprehensive watershed plan will provide a structure for the study of and plan for preventing and/or dealing with many threats to the watershed and our Lake.

The health of the Lake and watershed is affected by roadway management, land use, sediment, nutrients and much more. The region's recreation, drinking water, and economy are all dependent on its health. Our experience is not unlike other lakes in our region, and we will learn from them as well.

This must be a collaborative effort of governments, civic and environmental groups, businesses, and citizens. The WSC is working to bring the people and plans together to continue this work. (Thanks to Jim Howarth and the members of the WSC for this update.)

### **New Radar based Stream Flow Gauge on Shadow Brook**

For details and photos see the public Facebook post regarding the new radar-based stream flow gauge on Shadow Brook. This will provide critical real-time water input data for the lake water quality model for the Nine Element Plan. This gauge was a collaborative project of SWCD, WSC, OLA, the Town of Springfield, and SUNY Oneonta and BFS. Thanks go to Doug Willies for leading this project.

[https://www.facebook.com/plugins/post.php?href=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.facebook.com%2FotsegoSWCD%2Fposts%2Fpfbid02HsAQFH1tRNQM5Q3gFo3X5B9udkQMEfwW4Q3oGPM4dJYZ55zP36o9c3tUYf8Vwg8DI&show\\_text=true&width=500](https://www.facebook.com/plugins/post.php?href=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.facebook.com%2FotsegoSWCD%2Fposts%2Fpfbid02HsAQFH1tRNQM5Q3gFo3X5B9udkQMEfwW4Q3oGPM4dJYZ55zP36o9c3tUYf8Vwg8DI&show_text=true&width=500)



*Installed radar stream monitoring station on Shadow Brook.*

## Warmer Temperatures

Warmer temperatures /no ice cover winter conditions favor cold and/or temperature fluctuation tolerant species which include cyanobacteria and invasive species.

To see the history of recorded data of temperature change over the years, refer to the 2021 and 2022 OLA winter updates. For an excellent review of last year's winter, refer to Dr. Yokota's presentation at the 2022 annual meeting. All available on <https://www.otsegolakeassociation.org>



*The divers are discouraged by the lack of ice which makes classic ice diving unlikely this year, February 2024.*



*Volunteer dive team retrieves NWZB's, December 2023.*

## More News and Thanks

OLA is continuing its participation in Citizens Statewide Lake Assessment Program (CSLAP) for 2024. The 2023 “Lake Report Card” from NYSDEC/NYSFOLA summarizing the 2023 should be sent to OLA in the next month. Thank you to Doug and Rhonda Willies and Dr Yokota for their work on this program.

The annual New York State Federation of Lake Associations (NYSFOLA) conference will be held on 3-4 May 2024 at Lake George. As in years past, Board members will represent OLA. <https://nysfola.org/save-the-date-nysfola-annual-conference-may-3-4-2024-in-lake-george/>

## Save the Date



### Annual Gathering

Date: Saturday August 10<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

Time: Meeting 8:30am-11:00am

Location: Otsego Sailing Club, 5992 NY-80, Cooperstown, NY 13326



### Otsego Lake Clean-Up

Date: Sunday August 11<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

Time: 9:00am-2:00pm

Location: Otsego Lake.

Volunteers needed for Otsego Lake Clean-Up

[info@otsegolakeassociation.org](mailto:info@otsegolakeassociation.org)