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## EDITORIAL

# Take Control! Consider Otsego Lake Association

Annual Meeting at 9 a.m. This Saturday



*Otsego Lake Association Co-Presidents David Sanford, left, and Jim Howarth, right, chat with boat stewards Sierra Stickney, Oneonta, and Luis Suatoni, Springfield Center, at the boat-cleaning station at Cooperstown's Lakefront Park. (Jim Kevlin/AllOTSEGO.com)*

With so many areas of American life seemingly spinning out of control, there's a contrary example in the Otsego Lake Association (OLA).

Its “100-percent volunteers,” according to Jim Howarth, co-president with David Sanford, are focused on a common mission: “Protecting the health, beauty and wellbeing” of the lake.



*OLA stalwart Paul Lord shows a sample of the European Frog Bit, Otsego Lake’s latest invasive.*

Listening to them, it’s clear: Local volunteers, working together, can get a lot done.

There are larger non-profit, governmental and educational entities focused on the wellbeing of James Fenimore Cooper’s Glimmerglass, a national environmental icon – the OCCA, Otsego 2000, SUNY Oneonta’s Biological Field Station (BFS), the Susquehanna River Basin Commission, to name only a few – but the nimble OLA is a PT boat amid, if not aircraft carriers, the mid-size cruisers.

In advance of its annual meeting – this Saturday, Aug. 10, at Cooperstown’s Fairy Spring Park on East Lake Road; coffee and donuts at 8:30 a.m., with the meeting at 9-11 a.m., including conferring the annual Lake Citizen Award – Howarth and Sanford stopped by the other day to help raise the visibility of a story of accomplishment.

Like many OLA members, the two motivations came out of many happy personal experiences. Sanford recalls when commercial fishing was still allowed on the lake, and a daily staple at the Cooperstown Diner was Otsego Bass caught that morning. A student at SUNY Oneonta in the 1970s, Howarth remembers renting a motorbike from Thayer’s at \$5 a day to take his future bride Susan onto the lake. Or a canoe ride, \$2 a day.

As its second decade nears completion, the co-presidents reported, the OLA can point to some notable accomplishments.

Its lobbying helped achieve an 80 percent reduction the state DOT’s use of the powerful herbicide glyphosate – state crews (in HAZMAT suits) are now applying it along West Lake Road every five years, instead of annually. The county Highway Department has cut back significantly on deicing salt on East Lake Road. The Town of Springfield continues to be a model, using just enough salt to keep its sand piles from freezing.

Two, the OLA provides scientific support that allows technical initiatives to move forward with virtually no red tape, most recently the BFS' research buoy, tracking temperatures and turbulence from the surface to the lake bottom to predict climate-change impacts early on.

Three – and there's much beyond three – the OLA gives people who live by and love the lake (200 members, and more welcome) a chance to meet each other, share concerns, support solutions – and even have some fun; the annual Fourth of July Boat Parade is a case in point.

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The interview shifted to Fish Road, next to Lakefront Park, where BFS professor, dive-team leader and OLA stalwart Paul Lord was conferring with two boat stewards: This summer, SUNY Oneonta biology/ecology undergrad Sierra Stickney and master's candidate Luis Suatoni are cleaning boats as they enter and leave the lake, ensuring any invasive species stay put.

“You look at the boat,” Sanford explained, “but you talk to the person,” raising fishermen's awareness to damage invasives can do.

OLA support started the boat-cleaning – it's credited with keeping zebra mussels out of Otsego for a half-dozen of this century's early years. It's now administered by state-funded CRISP, (a great acronym for Catskill Regional Invasive Species Partnership).

That morning, Lord led a team trying to determine if the European Frog Bit, an invasive SUNY Oneonta Professor Donna Vogler had discovered in Weaver Lake, had entered Otsego via Cripple Creek in the vicinity of The Glimmerglass Festival. It's there; but so far, under control.

He is also concerned about the Spiny Waterflea, evident in other Upstate lakes. So far, Otsego has been spared, but “it's only a bait bucket away.”

The point is, the OLA's mission, begun 17 years ago, is ongoing for the foreseeable future.

Dan Rosen, Town of Springfield, was the vice president of the original board. In his view, OLA's structure – it includes members at large, plus two board members from each lakeside town, Otsego, Middlefield and Springfield – created a coalition of interested people and relevant officials able to react quickly to lake-wide challenges.

If you care, go to Saturday's annual meeting. If you can't go, you can still join: send \$25 (individual) or \$35 (family) to OLA, Box 13, Spring Center, NY 13468.

Hope to see you there.