

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

In April 2010, the Onondaga Nation decided to share with the public their vision for the future of Onondaga Lake. This vision was shared in the form of a booklet entitled *The Onondaga Nation's Vision for a Clean Onondaga Lake*. The document is a powerful and poetic description of the Onondaga Nation's deep connection with the lake, an account of the damage done, and the many positive possibilities for how the lake's evolution into the future. The complete text of the Onondaga Nation's vision can be found online at: www.onondaganation.org.

This glossary is an aid to understanding of *The Onondaga Nation's Vision for a Clean Onondaga Lake*. Included are definitions of both technical and cultural terms to guide the reader. Please use this glossary as you reflect on and synthesize the words that the Onondaga Nation has put forth.

- Aboriginal**- the first and earliest known of its kind in a particular place or region.
- Airshed** - a portion of the atmosphere where contaminants from a particular area tend to accumulate. This area is the unit used to measure concentrations of atmospheric contaminants for the purpose of environmental regulation.
- Aquifers**- a layer of silt, sand, gravel, or rock that allows for the storage and transport of groundwater. This water supplies wells and springs.
- Benthic**- the bottom layer of water in a water body (i.e. lakes, ponds, rivers) which includes the sediments at the bottom.
- Combined sewer overflows** - an event that occurs when a sewer system which combines waste water and street stormwater runoff discharges untreated water into water bodies during periods of heavy rainfall.
- Dark Sky Initiative**- a citizens' movement that seeks to diminish light pollution, especially in urban areas so that the stars are more visible and nocturnal wildlife can resume normal behavior.
- Dioxins** - a group of toxic and carcinogenic chemicals that are a by-product from industrial chlorine bleaching processes.
- Ecosystem** - a group of living and non-living elements characteristic to a certain area that form direct or indirect relationships.
- Emergent wetlands**- wetlands in which the roots and lower portions of plants are underwater while the leaves and upper portions are not.
- Geomorphology** - the study of how the earth's surface and physical land forms developed.
- Green infrastructure** - a way of managing land and man-made structures in order to restore or enhance services provided by the natural environment to humans. This includes park spaces, permeable pavements, and vegetated roofs.
- Groundwater** - a source of freshwater stored below ground which is created by water that falls to and penetrates the surface of the earth.

Haudenosaunee- the members of a confederacy of indigenous peoples of North Eastern America, commonly translated as "People of the Longhouse" and also known as the Six Nations or Iroquois Confederacy. The Haudenosaunee Confederacy consists of six nations: the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca, and Tuscarora Nations.

Invasive species- an organism that becomes established in a place outside of where it normally occurs, usually causing harm to this new ecosystem.

Invertebrates- organisms that do not have a spinal column or backbone.

Medicinal plants- herbs, shrubs, and trees used in treatment of ailments and illnesses.

Mercury (Hg) - a metallic chemical element. Aquatic life tends to readily accumulate mercury in their bodies. Mercury is not very soluble in water and is removed slowly from the atmosphere. Mercury is known to cause damage to the human nervous system.

Mudboils- small volcanoes of silt and sand. Mudboils form small or large cones in muddy areas and can erupt for a few hours or many years. The silt and sand comes from deep underground and contains large amounts of water.

Native species- a species that has evolved to occur in a specific area/ecosystem.

Non-point source pollution- a chemical or material carried into an ecosystem through water run-off or other indirect pathways that causes injury or disharmony within the system. This includes fertilizer from agricultural fields and surface mining operations.

PCBs (Polychlorinated biphenyls) - are synthetic compounds of chlorinated chemicals which accumulate in large concentrations in animal tissues and do not readily break down in the environment. They are known to cause skin disorders, cancer, and other adverse health effects. Manufacturing of PCBs have been banned since the 1970s.

Permeable pavement – sidewalks, court yards, and other normally concrete surfaces built with alternative materials that allow rainwater to flow through and go directly back into groundwater instead of sewers

Photovoltaic cells- a device that captures sunlight and converts it into usable electric energy which can be stored via batteries for human use (also known as solar cells or solar panels).

Point-source pollution – a chemical or material carried into an ecosystem through a single discrete source. This can be a specific smoke stake, an outlet pipe, or container.

Rain garden – a small depression where vegetation is planted to collect stormwater and help recharge groundwater. These gardens help reduce the amount of stormwater that flows into sewers.

Responsibility - a duty or obligation that one must carry out and bear the consequences thereof.

Subsidence- the settlement of land such that the surface sinks. Often depressions are created.

Swales – a low marshy area of land between areas of significantly higher elevations, where rain water runoff can flow and be channeled back into groundwater.

Symbiosis- a relationship that develops over time when two or more organisms live together in an interdependent manner.

Thermocline- a middle horizontal layer of water in a water body where the temperature decreases rapidly with depth.

Tributary- a branching water body that flows into a larger body of water.

Tubers- an enlarged underground portion of a plant that stores nutrients, especially for the winter months.

Vegetated roofs- the roof of a building where vegetation is partially or completely grown on the surface, usually this is done through placing down some type of growth medium (green roofs, living roofs). This serves to help regulate rainwater runoff and keep it out of the sewers, provide wildlife habitat, and help insulate buildings.

Wetlands - areas of low elevation where the soil is saturated with water, either permanently or seasonally.

•••••
Sources Cited

• <http://www.fda.gov/Food/FoodSafety/Food-ContaminantsAdulteration/ChemicalContaminants/DioxinsPCBs/ucm077524.htm#g2>

• <http://www.epa.gov/hg/effects.htm>

• <http://www.onondaganation.org/>

•••••

Designed and compiled by Janaile Spence with support from the Onondaga Environmental Institute (OEI). Printed on 30% recycled paper with soy-based inks.