



Onondaga Environmental Institute

102 West Division Street
Syracuse, New York 13204

Phone (315) 472-2150
Fax (315) 474-0537

Thank you **Congressman Maffei** and **Senator Gillibrand**, Thank you for this Great Opportunity. Distinguished **Speakers** and **Friends**.

Thank you **ALL** for coming here today.

The Onondaga Lake Watershed is a complex system facing a myriad of environmental issues including:

eutrophication and anoxia due to excessive nutrient loading,
an industrial legacy leaving a variety of hazardous wastes sites and chemicals,
and
over development throughout the watershed, resulting in habitat degradation and loss, and the extirpation of important species.

Yet in the past 2 decades, significant improvements have been made and I'd like to acknowledge some of the key accomplishments. I apologize in advance should I forget something. Therefore I'll speak in terms of organizations and institutions where many individuals have contributed over the years.

First, I'd like to thank the **Upstate Freshwater Institute** for producing one of the world's largest bodies of information and knowledge specific to a single system. I often liken environmental remediation to medicine. You can't cure a patient, if you don't understand the disease. Much of our understanding of Onondaga Lake is credited to UFI.

I'd also like to acknowledge **esf** and **SU** for numerous contributions to science (of particular note is that of mercury chemistry), policy and planning for Onondaga Lake.

USGS and **OCSWCD** for their work in controlling mudboil sediment discharges to Onondaga Creek and non-point source pollution throughout the watershed.

Onondaga County for the very successful improvements at the metropolitan sewage treatment facility. The upgrades at METRO have dramatically lowered nutrient loading to the lake. I'd be remiss if I didn't acknowledge the County's recent shift from regional

treatment of CSOs to a strategy of sewer separation, storage and pumping, and green infrastructure.

The **City of Syracuse** for its renewed commitment to the Lake and Onondaga Creek.

To **OLMC, OLP and State and Federal Officials and Agencies** including the NYS AG's Office, NYSDEC, USEPA and ACE for their oversight, financial support, and the difficult and thankless job of regulation; the constant balancing of competing and oftentimes opposing interests.

To Honeywell for its continued cooperation, monetary and social commitments to this community, and its pledge to habitat restoration.

To groups like the Nine Mile Creek Conservation Council, Project Watershed, Izaak Walton League, Angler's Association, Federation of Sportsman, Sierra Club, Onondaga Creek Working Group, Partnership for Onondaga Creek, Neighbors of Onondaga, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Central New York Regional Planning and Development Board, League of Women's voters, Citizen's Campaign for the Environment, and the Atlantic States Legal Foundation for their many efforts in volunteerism, public education, community involvement, and the vigilant pursuit of justice and equitable and proper application of environmental policy and law.

And finally, I'd like to thank the Onondaga Nation for their leadership, patience, and vision for Onondaga Lake.

We gratefully recognize the accomplishments of the recent past; yet today is just a beginning. There is much work to be done. Under this proposed legislation forming the Onondaga Lake Watershed Council, the task of identifying, implementing and achieving this community's vision for the future will not be easy.

Nevertheless we are committed to the challenge and dedicated to the public good. All willing participants will have a voice and a place at the table. We vow to work towards our common goals and interests and not break down over our differences.

We will strive to promote collective involvement, foster an atmosphere of collaboration, cooperation and respectful dialogue, and build compromise and consensus on the many difficult decisions before us.

We will work toward the understanding that no one party or entity is responsible for the restoration of Onondaga Lake; the effort will require broad based community support over a long period of time.

Thank You

Ed Michalenko, PhD, OEI President, July 6, 2010