

WATERSHED COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

June 18th, 2012

Final Report

Prepared by



Onondaga
Environmental
Institute



Program for the Advancement
of Research on Conflict
and Collaboration
at the Syracuse University
Maxwell School

Prepared for



A clean lake reflects well
on all of us.



Onondaga Lake
Natural Resource Damage
Assessment and Restoration
Trustee Council



September 2012

Watershed Community Connections

Public Forum

Final Report and Appendices

Prepared for

**Onondaga Lake Partnership
and
Onondaga Lake Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration
Trustee Council**

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Table of Contents

Acronyms and Abbreviations	iii
Executive Summary	1
Introduction	2
Forum Sponsors	2
Forum Partners	3
Planning Group	3
Methodology	4
Meeting Marketing	4
Meeting Logistics	6
Results	10
Discussion Questions	10
Dotmocracy	14
Conclusion	15
Appendices:	
Appendix 1 – Save-the-Date	
Appendix 2 – Invitation	
Appendix 3 – Press Release	
Appendix 4 – Save-the-Date, Web Version	
Appendix 5 – Agenda	
Appendix 6 – The Law of Two Feet	
Appendix 7 – Themes and Groups	
Appendix 8 – Notes from Discussion Groups	



Acronyms and Abbreviations

CERCLA – Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act

CNY – Central New York

CPWG – Onondaga Lake Community Participation Working Group

NYS DEC – New York State Department of Environmental Conservation – Region 7

OEI – Onondaga Environmental Institute

OLP – Onondaga Lake Partnership

PARCC – Program for the Advancement of Research on Conflict and Collaboration at the
Syracuse University Maxwell School

SUNY ESF – State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry

Trustees – Onondaga Lake Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration Trustee
Council

USEPA – United States Environmental Protection Agency

USFWS – United States Department of the Interior Fish and Wildlife Service



Executive Summary

On Monday June 18th, 2012, the Onondaga Lake Partnership (OLP) and the Onondaga Lake Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration Trustee Council (Trustees) hosted a collaborative community outreach effort called Watershed Community Connections. This free public meeting was held in the Tiffany Ballroom of the Genesee Grande Hotel in Syracuse, New York, from 5:00 pm to 8:30 pm. It was organized to build on the success of the Onondaga Lake Watershed Community Forum held in November 2011. The purpose of this follow-up forum was to identify community priorities for the future of the Onondaga Lake watershed and opportunities to get involved. Onondaga Environmental Institute (OEI) organized the forum in coordination with a Planning Group and prepared this report on behalf of the OLP and Trustees.

Over twenty government agencies and community organizations participated in the forum as volunteers, exhibitors, presenters, facilitators, and practitioners. A total of approximately 130 people attended. A majority of participants felt that the Watershed Community Connections forum was a positive experience and used the opportunity to define interests, visions, challenges, and next steps for the lake watershed.

The unique meeting format empowered attendees to initiate and contribute to discussions on a variety of topics. A number of overarching themes emerged from their input. Participants valued the Onondaga Lake watershed as a resource with many dimensions of ecological and cultural importance, and they saw a need for that resource to be restored and protected. They acknowledged completed and progressing work on watershed issues and offered many suggestions for how to improve or build on those initiatives.

There was a strong collective call for increased public education and involvement along with transformation of how people view and interact with the watershed. Attendees advocated for an organized governance structure to manage and coordinate across the full spectrum of watershed projects and stakeholders. They believed that structure or process needed to be inclusive, engage diverse stakeholders, and utilize a holistic and long-term planning approach. Acquiring funding to support watershed management was a common point of concern.

Overall, forum participants showed great interest in continuing to forge watershed community connections through open dialogue and collaborative resource management. This report will be useful to decision-makers in preparing for and conducting further community conversations regarding the future of the Onondaga Lake watershed. Questions about the forum or this report may be directed to the Onondaga Environmental Institute at 315-472-2150 or admin@oei2.org.



Introduction

On Monday June 18th, 2012, the Onondaga Lake Partnership (OLP) and the Onondaga Lake Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration Trustee Council (Trustees) hosted a collaborative community outreach effort called Watershed Community Connections. This free public meeting was held in the Tiffany Ballroom of the Genesee Grande Hotel in Syracuse, New York, from 5:00 pm to 8:30 pm. The event was put forth to build on the success of the Onondaga Lake Watershed Community Forum held in November 2011. The purpose of this follow-up forum was to identify community priorities for the future of the Onondaga Lake watershed and opportunities to get involved.

Onondaga Environmental Institute (OEI) organized the forum in coordination with a Planning Group and prepared this report on behalf of the OLP and Trustees. This report describes the methods for conducting the forum, including planning, execution, and collection of community feedback. It summarizes participants' comments and concludes with an overview of prominent themes from their input. OEI intends for this report to be useful both to decision-makers and residents of the Onondaga Lake watershed as a record of community feedback and an account of a successful and replicable model for public meetings.

The forum was emceed by Meredith Perreault, Project Manager at Onondaga Environmental Institute, and Tina Nabatchi, Assistant Professor of Public Administration and International Affairs and Faculty Research Associate at the Program for the Advancement of Research on Conflict and Collaboration (PARCC) at Syracuse University's Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs. Over twenty government agencies and community organizations participated in the forum as volunteers, exhibitors, presenters, facilitators, and practitioners.¹ A total of approximately 130 people attended.

Forum Sponsors

The OLP sponsored the forum with federal funds granted through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). The OLP includes representatives from six key government partners responsible for management of Onondaga Lake, plus many other partners, noted on the Onondaga Lake Partnership website (www.onlakepartners.org): USEPA Region 2; US Army Corps of Engineers, Buffalo District; New York State Department of Environmental Conservation – Region 7 (NYS DEC); New York State Office of the Attorney General; Onondaga County; and City of Syracuse.

The forum was also conceptualized and promoted by the Trustees, a council of representatives from the Onondaga Nation, the US Department of the Interior Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the NYS DEC. In accordance with U.S. federal law, the Trustees are currently assessing harm to natural resources and associated service losses that may not be remedied under

¹ These roles are described in more detail under "Methodology."



the Superfund hazardous waste remediation, and later the Trustees will determine what restoration projects must be completed.²

Forum Partners

Two organizations collaborated with OEI to conduct the forum, by volunteering time or providing resources. Roles of the organizations are described in the Methodology section. OEI would like to acknowledge their contributions to the success of the forum.

- Program for the Advancement of Research on Conflict and Collaboration (PARCC) and its Conflict Management Center, at the Maxwell School of Syracuse University
- Onondaga Lake Community Participation Working Group (CPWG)

Planning Group

OEI was directed by the OLP Executive Committee to convene a planning group for the forum. The Planning Group included representatives from OLP member agencies and the Trustees who worked together to ensure that both OLP and Trustee goals were met and developed into a mutually beneficial event. The Planning Group met twice to plan the forum and provided essential services and guidance for logistics planning, media communications, marketing, and conducting the forum. The following individuals, listed in alphabetical order by affiliation, served on the Planning Group:

- Yasmin Guevara – City of Syracuse
- Thane Joyal – Counsel to the Law Office of Joseph Heath, General Counsel to the Onondaga Nation
- Jack Ramsden – CPWG
- Jaime Lawlor – Designworks Advertising
- Conrad Strozik – Izaak Walton League, Central New York Chapter
- Emily Lawson – Law Office of Joseph Heath, General Counsel to the Onondaga Nation
- Lindsay Speer – M&R Strategic Services for the Onondaga Nation
- Stephanie Harrington – NYS DEC
- Tyler Andre – OEI
- Sean Keefe – OEI
- Meredith Perreault – OEI
- Amy Samuels – OEI
- BrandiLee Schafran – OEI
- Sarah Wraight – OEI
- David Coburn – Onondaga County
- Lance Cooper – PARCC, Syracuse University
- Tina Nabatchi – PARCC, Syracuse University
- Peter Brandt – USEPA

OEI would like to acknowledge the Planning Group for its critical input and guidance in organizing the event.

² For more information about the Onondaga Lake Natural Resource Damage Assessment, please visit the website of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service at: <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/nyfo/ec/onondaga.htm>.



Methodology

The following sections of this report outline the methods employed to conduct the community forum.

Meeting Marketing

To reach Onondaga Lake watershed residents and concerned community members, OEI used several different marketing mediums to promote the Watershed Community Connections forum. With minimal planning time, the goal was to inform as many community members as possible about the event and to emphasize reaching those who hadn't shown an interest before, yet were affected by the state of the watershed.

Building on the marketing strategy developed for the Onondaga Lake Watershed Community Forum held in November 2011, OEI expanded the original forum's contact list from 118 individual contacts to 276. These contacts represented 201 local community organizations (government agencies, non-profit, for-profit, clubs, working groups, etc.), 28 educational institutions, and 30 government representatives and elected officials, including town supervisors within Onondaga County.³ To the extent possible during the weeks preceding the forum, OEI staff emailed multiple communications to each entity on this list. To aid this effort, OEI consulted with the Planning Group and contracted with Designworks Advertising for design and messaging services. During the week of May 28, 2012, OEI emailed a Save-the-Date notice (Appendix 1) introducing Watershed Community Connections as a follow-up meeting to the November 2011 forum. With the help of listservs hosted by NYS DEC, Onondaga County's Save the Rain outreach program, Neighbors of the Onondaga Nation, and State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry (SUNY ESF) Office of Communications, the Save-the-Date email was forwarded to at least 2000 people, probably with some overlap among these lists.

In addition to the Save-the-Date, some contacts received invitations to get involved in specific ways at the forum. In consultation with the Planning Group, OEI identified 62 individuals who were actively participating in work pertaining to the future of Onondaga Lake and who had specialized knowledge about watershed issues.⁴ These people, hereafter referred to as "practitioners," were invited to both participate and play a support role in the forum (described below). Thirty-six practitioners attended Watershed Community Connections. OEI also worked with the Planning Group to invite practitioners and a small number of other community organizations to bring information, posters, or exhibits for display before and during the event. A

³ OEI compiled this contact list by drawing upon its experience and existing database of local organizations interested in Onondaga Lake and its watershed, and by taking recommendations from the Planning Group. To expedite the dissemination of information, OEI focused on organizations that could forward announcements to their members or listservs, thereby quickly multiplying outreach through email distribution.

⁴ Forum organizers invited individuals who were knowledgeable in one or more of five broad topic areas that were anticipated to be foci of forum discussions: CERCLA Remediation and Restoration, Fisheries, History and Culture, Land Use, Water Quality.



selection of ten community organizations and government agencies⁵ that have conducted environmental projects in the lake's watershed were recruited to exhibit at the forum.

Two weeks after distributing the Save-the-Date, an invitation (Appendix 2) was emailed to OEI's contacts and was forwarded through the same partners' listservs. The invitation presented additional information about the event and its sponsors. Planning Group members forwarded the invitation to state and county employees. The Town of Dewitt administrative staff volunteered to forward the invitation to all current Onondaga County town supervisors and planning boards, as well as to local representatives of the New York State Assembly and Senate. USEPA Region 2 staff notified federal government representatives. An invitation reminder was sent out to the mailing lists the day of the event.



Exhibits at Watershed Community Connections
Photo: James Voodre

OEI used additional marketing techniques to ensure it reached the most diversified audience possible in the amount of time given. Other techniques included:

- 30 flyers were distributed to each of Onondaga County's 32 public libraries.
- 25 flyers were distributed to the Dunbar Center on the Southside of Syracuse, NY.
- Approximately 125 flyers were distributed on the Onondaga Nation.
- 25 flyers were distributed to the Dewitt Town Hall.
- The Town of Dewitt, as a free service, posted a message on the Dewitt Community Information Digital Sign, at the high traffic intersection of Erie Boulevard East and East Genesee Street.
- NYS DEC distributed a press release (Appendix 3) to the media on June 11, 2012.
- 15 advertisements (modified from the invitation) were run on Centro buses for the week prior to the event and up until the day of the event. The ads were 26"x8.5" and were posted inside the bus, on routes chosen by Centro. OEI requested priority placement on routes to Carousel Mall and the bus line near the meeting location.
- A smaller web version of the Save-the-Date (Appendix 4) was designed and posted on OEI's website and Facebook page.
- The Save-the-Date was posted on 12 local organizations' Facebook pages: 40 Below, B.E.A.N., Syracuse University, Slow Food CNY, Near Westside Initiative, South Side Innovation Center, Onondaga Shoreline Heritage Restoration, Save the Rain, The Daily Orange, SUNY ESF, LeMoyne College, and Onondaga Community College.

⁵ Exhibitors: Partnership for Onondaga Creek, NYS DEC, Izaak Walton League – Central New York Chapter, Onondaga County Soil & Water Conservation District, SUNY ESF, Nine Mile Creek Conservation Council, OEI, FOCUS Greater Syracuse, CNY Regional Planning and Development Board, US Fish & Wildlife Service



- The Save-the-Date was posted to 6 community calendars: The Post-Standard, CNY Channel 3/5, Channel 9, WRVO, The Scotsman Press, and The Eagle.
- An OEI staff member was interviewed by CNY Central for the weekend segment “In Your Neighborhood.”
- A radio station public service announcement was recorded and aired during the week leading up to the event. Stations included: WSEN, WAER, TK99, The Sunnyspot 99, Krock, Power AM 620, and WSYR 106.9.

Meeting Logistics

The Planning Group and OEI wanted to build on the success of the previous forum without duplicating it. The Genesee Grand Hotel Tiffany Ballroom, in Syracuse, NY, was selected for the catered meeting venue. The Genesee Grand Hotel lies within the Onondaga Lake watershed and met the forum’s space requirements. Removable partitions divided the ballroom into three parts, one large room and two smaller adjacent rooms that were left open to accommodate free movement throughout the space. Genesee Grand Hotel has ample parking on site and is accessible by Centro bus stop, serving citizens who rely on public transportation. The Planning Group selected a weeknight and early evening time period to increase the likelihood of diverse public attendance.

In creating the meeting format, the Planning Group drew inspiration from a process called Open Space Technology.⁶ “Watershed Community Connections” was set as an overall theme and participants were asked to address a common set of discussion questions. Within this framework, participants decided upon discussion topics and were free to select the discussion group or groups in which they participated. OEI worked closely with PARCC-affiliated faculty and graduate students to plan and execute the forum proceedings.

Tina Nabatchi, a Faculty Research Associate with PARCC, developed the forum agenda (Appendix 5). The event had four main parts: Doors Open / Registration (5:00-5:30 PM), Welcome and Overview (5:30-6:00 PM), Group Discussion (6:00-7:30 PM), and Group Reporting and Closure (7:30-8:30 PM).

Upon arrival, attendees were greeted by representatives of the Community Participation Working Group (CPWG). They were asked to register for the event and were given a name tag, an agenda, and an index card. Participants were asked to use the index card to answer (in a few words) the following question: “*Think about your vision for the Onondaga Lake watershed. What issue would you most like to talk about tonight?*” These index cards were collected by PARCC facilitators and used to create an affinity diagram on one wall in the ballroom. The affinity diagram grouped common topics from the index cards into overall themes, each of which would later become the focus of a discussion group.

⁶ More information about Open Space Technology is available online at: <http://www.openspaceworld.org/cgi/wiki.cgi?AboutOpenSpace>





Affinity diagram of participants' suggestions for discussion topics
Photo: James Voodre

Throughout the registration period, exhibits (as specified above) were distributed around the room and refreshments were available. This portion of the meeting was an opportunity for attendees to learn more about watershed history and current projects, ask questions of exhibitors, and share their knowledge and experience of the watershed.

At 5:30 PM, Meredith Perreault of OEI and Tina Nabatchi of PARCC welcomed participants, introduced the theme of “Watershed

Community Connections,” and explained the forum’s process and ground rules for discussion. Participants were asked to follow the “Law of Two Feet,” (Appendix 6) which held that anyone at anytime for any reason was free to move to another discussion group. This allowed people to serve the roles of “bumblebees” or “butterflies” by transporting valuable information and ideas between the groups they visited.⁷ Participants were also told that their group did not have to meet for the whole time allotted for discussion (“When it’s over, it’s over”). If a group finished addressing all the discussion questions, participants were free to adjourn and disperse to take part in other conversations or start a new discussion group. Other discussion rules included “Those who show up are the right people – don’t worry about who is missing” and “Whatever happens is all that could have happened – allow the conversation to flow freely.” Finally, participants were asked to have respectful conversations, to speak openly and honestly, to explore differences by listening carefully and respectfully to each person, and to keep comments brief and stay focused on the task.

Tina Nabatchi reviewed eight main themes that emerged from the index cards submitted by participants during registration. Participants were invited to choose a discussion group focused on one of the eight themes. Two groups, Public Use & Access and Wildlife & Habitat, had a large number of participants and were divided to make it easier for the facilitators to manage and capture the conversations. The forum therefore had a total of ten discussion groups, each assigned to a different location in the meeting space:

1. Water Quality
2. Stormwater Management
3. Sedimentation
4. Watershed Management
5. Public Use & Access (Group 1)

⁷ The Law of Two Feet was displayed on posters throughout the meeting space to remind attendees that they were free to move between discussion groups (see Appendix 6).



6. Public Use & Access (Group 2)
7. Superfund
8. Education
9. Wildlife & Habitat (Group 1)
10. Wildlife & Habitat (Group 2)

A trained facilitator and a note-taker, in most cases PARCC faculty members or graduate students, were assigned to each discussion group to capture the conversation on a flipchart and to keep the group focused on the following five discussion questions:

1. *If we were successful, what would the future look like with regards to the issue your group is discussing?* (The goal of this question was to understand attendees’ visions for the issue and their hopes for the future.)
2. *Why is this issue important to you?* (The goal of this question was to identify attendees’ positions and interests on the issue.)
3. *In thinking about this issue, what are the major problems and concerns today?* (The goal of this question was to help participants see the gaps between the current reality and their desired state.)
4. *What are the next steps for making your hopes a reality?* (The goal of this question was to make attendees think about critical gaps and what realistically needs to happen to achieve their desired state.)
5. *Who should work on this issue and how do you want to be involved in moving forward?* (The goal of these joint questions was to identify stakeholders that would/should be interested in the issue and to see how individuals wanted to be involved in the future.)

During the ensuing group discussions, a running list of groups and their meeting locations was displayed on a computer projection screen at the front of the ballroom. Practitioners, who had been given name tags with colored ribbons signaling their availability to answer questions on specific topics,⁸ participated in the group discussions and responded to information requests when flagged by facilitators who raised colored index cards corresponding to the colors of their ribbons.



Above: PARCC facilitator reports on main themes of group discussion

Photo: James Voodre

At 7:30 PM, a facilitator from each group briefly reported back to the whole room about the main themes of their group’s conversation. Practitioners were then invited to comment on what they heard. The purpose of this portion of the evening, which was titled “Next Steps: Building Partnerships for Action,” was to promote continued dialogue between watershed residents and practitioners. Such dialogue is a vital foundation for community partnerships in efforts to restore and revitalize Onondaga Lake.

⁸ See footnote 4.



At the close of the event, participants were each given two stickers and asked to participate in a “Dotmocracy” exercise to provide feedback about the forum. Specifically, they were asked to place the stickers on poster boards in response to two questions: how much they enjoyed their overall experience at the meeting, and whether they would come to another meeting like this one. All organizers, volunteers, and attendees were thanked for their participation, and the forum was adjourned.



Above: PARCC facilitator reports on main themes of group discussion
 Photo: James Voodre



Practitioner comments during
 Next Steps: Building
 Partnerships for Action
 Photo: James Voodre



Dotmocracy
 Photo: James Voodre



Results

Forum participants' comments were analyzed and are presented here by data type.

Discussion Questions

A number of common themes emerged from the discussion groups' responses to the five discussion questions. They are described below. Information about which groups discussed specific themes may be found in Appendix 7. For a complete record of flipchart notes from each discussion group, please refer to Appendix 8.

Discussion Question 1: If we were successful, what would the future look like with regards to the issue your group is discussing?

A prominent theme in forum participants' responses to this question was a vision of restored and protected ecosystems throughout the watershed, to be evidenced by such conditions as:

- Improved water quality
- A non-toxic environment and wildlife that is not contaminated
- Areas around the lake and throughout the watershed that are protected from development
- Re-established native species
- Re-naturalized aquatic and riparian habitats
- Protection of Onondaga Creek from mudboil sedimentation



Discussion groups
Photo: James Voodre

Attendees also said that there should be increased public access to and use of the resources of the watershed, especially the waterfront areas and the fish. Resource management should accommodate diverse uses and purposes and should achieve a balance between public use and ecosystem health. Participants envisioned a future in which local people would be better educated and have positive attitudes about the watershed and its resources. Natural resource management would be achieved in accordance with a structured process or plan through collaboration among diverse partners, with strong involvement by watershed residents and local governments.



Discussion Question 2: Why is this issue important to you?

Although many responses to this question were specific to the issues being addressed by each discussion group, some common themes were evident. Forum attendees identified valued connections between the local environment, history, and culture. Moreover, they believed that actions taken on the selected issues carried important consequences. Actions on these issues influence quality of life, particularly with regard to affects on the local and regional economy, people's ability to use and enjoy local natural resources, people's sense of connection to the local environment, and public safety. The watershed community's approach to resource management also affects the integrity of local ecosystems, how the region is perceived by the general public, and the community's ability to meet its goals for the future of the watershed.



Photo: James Voodre

Discussion Question 3: In thinking about this issue, what are the major problems and concerns today?

The degradation of the watershed environment was identified as a major problem, as were the



Photo: James Voodre

negative effects of that environmental damage upon local residents. Attendees expressed concern that the Onondaga Lake Superfund site was not being adequately cleaned up. They saw a need for a more holistic approach to watershed issues, arguing that the lake watershed should be viewed as an integrated whole and that its resources should be restored and managed in a comprehensive way. They also felt there was a need for more long-term thinking and planning in the management of the lake watershed.

Forum attendees noted that it was difficult to achieve collaboration and agreement amongst many stakeholders with diverse interests in the watershed. Some participants described conflicts that they perceived to exist between specific stakeholders or interests. Many shared concerns



about the costs of projects and maintenance associated with watershed management, citing uncertain or non-existent funding.



Photo: James Voodre

Another concern described by attendees was the need for more education and involvement of the public as well as for changes in people’s norms, values, and practices relating to local water resources. Participants advocated for local communities to develop greater appreciation and better stewardship of the lake watershed.

Discussion Question 4: What are the next steps for making your hopes a reality?

Participants provided a diverse array of specific recommendations for next steps. One common theme among their responses was a call for research. They advised bringing together existing knowledge and gathering additional information about the historical and present state of the watershed, with attention to how this area compares to other watersheds around the country and around the world. Options for future resource management should also be studied and evaluated for their potential impacts on the Onondaga Lake watershed.



Forum attendees believed it was important to decide on specific goals and strategies to guide watershed management. They proposed a variety of approaches, including: adopting a principle of “do no harm” vis-à-vis recovering species, developing management plans that address the entire watershed over the long-term, and utilizing data that illustrate the historical and current state of watershed. The creation of a watershed management process or group was also perceived as a



Photos: James Voodre



necessary next step. Participants urged that it be inclusive of many diverse stakeholders, promote collaboration, and establish common goals. Another priority they identified was acquiring funding to support future projects.

Many discussion groups emphasized the importance of educating and communicating with the public about the watershed and providing opportunities for people to participate directly in restoration and conservation efforts. They offered a plethora of ideas for community engagement, such as organizing art contests or science fairs related to the watershed, incentivizing restoration efforts by private landowners, creating programs that bring people to the Creek Walk and into contact with other tributaries, and facilitating watershed visioning projects by grade school students.

Discussion Question 5: Who should work on this issue and how do you want to be involved in moving forward?

Forum attendees suggested that watershed management be coordinated by a council or unified committee with centralized operations. They also recommended engaging a broad list of expert professionals and agencies to draw upon their knowledge, experience, resources, and influence.



Photo: James Voodre

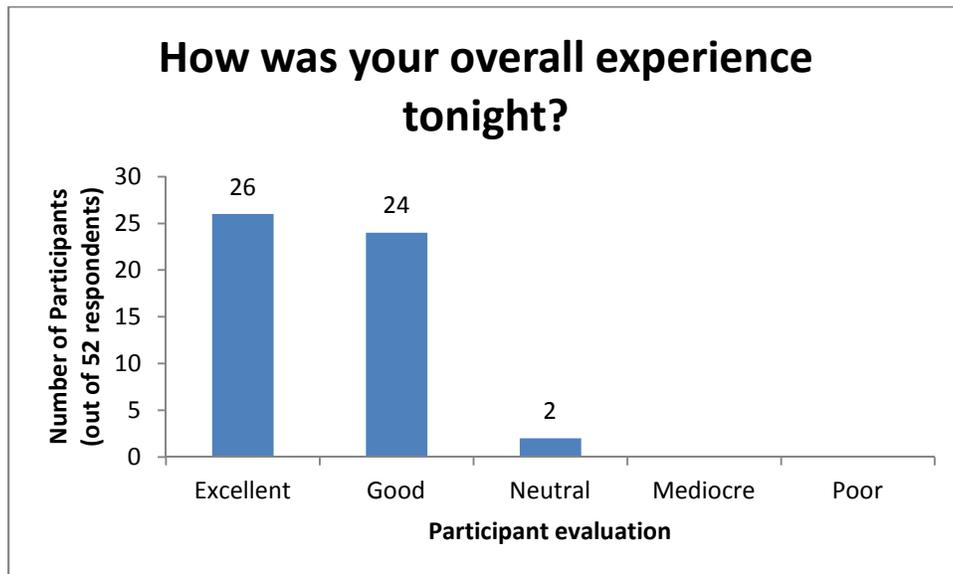
Onondaga Nation, United States federal, New York State, Onondaga County and local municipal leaders should be informed about and involved in watershed issues. Nearly all the discussion groups advocated for education and involvement of watershed residents with diverse perspectives and interests.

There were relatively few responses to the question of how forum participants wanted to be involved. In many cases, participants were already personally or professionally active in watershed-related work. Those who answered the question expressed interest in continuing the dialogue and taking action on the issues at hand.



Dotmocracy

Through a Dotmocracy process, fifty-six of fifty-seven respondents indicated that they would be interested in attending another meeting similar to the forum. Of the participants who rated their overall experience at the forum, the great majority indicated that it was excellent or good.



Conclusion

A majority of participants felt that the Watershed Community Connections forum was a positive experience and used the opportunity to define interests, visions, challenges, and next steps for the lake watershed. The unique meeting format empowered attendees to initiate and contribute to discussions on a variety of topics.

A number of overarching themes are evident in the input gathered during the group discussions. Participants valued the Onondaga Lake watershed as a resource with many dimensions of ecological and cultural importance, and they saw a need for that resource to be restored and protected. They expressed interest in reviewing existing knowledge about the watershed and conducting additional research to help evaluate options for future resource management. Many acknowledged completed and progressing work on watershed issues and offered suggestions for how to improve or build on those initiatives.

There was a strong collective call for increased public education and involvement along with transformation of how people view and interact with the watershed. Attendees advocated for an organized governance structure to manage and coordinate across the full spectrum of watershed projects and stakeholders. They believed that structure or process needed to be inclusive, engage



Photo: James Voodre

diverse stakeholders, and utilize a holistic and long-term planning approach. Acquiring funding to support watershed management was a common point of concern. The desire to build more community connections, both social partnerships and relationships to the watershed environment, was reaffirmed in the remarks made by practitioners during the portion of the evening called “Next Steps: Building Partnerships for Action.” At the close of the event, an audience member proposed holding a day-long meeting during which participants would identify shared needs and goals. The enthusiastic response to this proposal from forum attendees, discussion groups’ shared emphasis on public participation, and the number of Dotmocracy respondents who expressed willingness to attend a similar meeting in future all conveyed strong interest in continuing to forge these watershed community connections through open dialogue and collaborative resource management. This report will be useful to decision-makers in preparing for and conducting further community conversations regarding the future of the Onondaga Lake watershed. Questions about the forum or this report may be directed to the Onondaga Environmental Institute at 315-472-2150 or admin@oei2.org.



Appendices



Watershed Community Connections

Join us for an encore public forum!

Monday, June 18th 5:00pm-8:30pm

Genesee Grande Hotel – Tiffany Ballroom

1060 East Genesee Street, Syracuse

Open to the Public. Free parking is available.

Refreshments served at 5:00pm, meeting begins at 5:30pm.

Join the continuing discussion shaping the future of the Onondaga Lake Watershed.

**For more information visit: www.onlakepartners.org
or call (315) 472-2150.**



Onondaga Lake
Natural Resource Damage
Assessment and Restoration
Trustee Council





Join us for our second public forum to discuss
the Onondaga Lake Watershed!

Monday, June 18th, 5 pm – 8:30 pm
Genesee Grande Hotel—Tiffany Ballroom
1060 East Genesee Street, Syracuse

Open to the public. Free parking available.

Light refreshments served at 5 pm, meeting begins at 5:30 pm

Be part of the continuing conversation about Onondaga Lake and its watershed!

RE-CONNECT. Lakes and streams link our communities together. Connect with our watershed community as we discuss initiatives to shape its future.

BE HEARD. This meeting will provide a space to speak up and discuss topics of interest to you. The meeting agenda and discussion will be driven by you and other attendees.

GO DEEPER. Our community forum in November 2011 was a great conversation. Now it's time to go deeper into the ideas and topics discussed at the forum. Some topic examples may include, but are certainly not limited to: the Loop the Lake trail, lake cleanup, volunteer opportunities and recruitment, recreational activities, and fish.

OUR GOAL. We will work together to identify our priorities for the future of the watershed and opportunities to get involved. Community input will inform a public recommendations document for government agencies and environmental groups responsible for implementing future watershed initiatives.



A clean lake reflects well
on all of us.



Onondaga Lake
Natural Resource Damage
Assessment and Restoration
Trustee Council





Onondaga Lake Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration Trustee Council



PRESS RELEASE

For Release: Immediate
June 11, 2012

Contact: Diane Carlton
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Onondaga Watershed Community Connections Public Forum to be held on June 18th

Join the continuing discussion shaping the future of the Onondaga Lake watershed

Syracuse, NY □ The Onondaga Lake Partnership (OLP) and the Onondaga Lake Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration Trustee Council (Trustees) are pleased to host an important public discussion regarding Onondaga Lake and its watershed at the Genesee Grande Hotel Ballroom on Monday, June 18, 2012 (www.onlakepartners.org). Doors open and refreshments will be served at 5:00 p.m.; the meeting will begin at 5:30 p.m. The format of this meeting will promote creative ideas and discussion.

The event is free and open to anyone with an interest in Onondaga Lake and its watershed. The format for this meeting will be less structured than many in that it will allow participants to drive the discussion around what is important to them. Attendees will be able to propose Onondaga Lake related topics and convene conversations around those topics, engaging community members and experts alike, generating stronger partnerships between citizens, community organizations, and government entities. The discussions at this meeting will be used to inform future efforts of all levels of government and other entities working to revitalize Onondaga Lake and its watershed.

This public event about the Onondaga Lake watershed is a follow-up to and will build upon a community forum held at the Rosamond Gifford Zoo in November 2011. A report from that meeting can be found at www.onlakepartners.org/forum.

WHO: Interested community members, government representatives, experts

WHAT: Collaborative discussion on the future of the Onondaga Lake watershed

WHEN: 5-8:30 pm, Monday, June 18, 2012

WHERE: Genesee Grande Hotel, Tiffany Ballroom, 1060 East Genesee Street, Syracuse

The Onondaga Lake Partnership is comprised of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, the New York State Attorney General's Office, Onondaga County, and the City of Syracuse.

The Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration Trustees for Onondaga Lake include the Onondaga Nation; the Federal Government, represented by the U.S. Department of the Interior / U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; and New York State represented by the Department of Environmental Conservation.

***Watershed Community
Connections***

**Monday, June 18th
5:00pm-8:30pm**

**Genesee Grande Hotel – Tiffany Ballroom
1060 East Genesee Street, Syracuse**

*Join the continuing discussion shaping the
future of the Onondaga Lake Watershed.*



An Encore Public Forum

Monday June 18th, 2012

5:00 PM – 8:30 PM

5:00 Registration

Task for Participants: Consider the following question: *Think about your vision for the Onondaga Lake watershed. What issue would you most like to talk about tonight? Write a short answer (just a few words) on your index card and give the card to a staff person.*

5:30 Welcome and Overview of the Meeting

6:00 Discussion Group Formation

Several discussion groups will be formed based on the themes from the index cards.

6:15 Group Discussions

Each group will discuss the following five questions:

1. *If we were successful, what would the future look like with regards to the issue your group is discussing?*
2. *Why is this issue important to you?*
3. *In thinking about this issue, what are the major problems and concerns today?*
4. *What are the next steps for making your hopes a reality?*
5. *Who should work on this issue and how do you want to be involved in moving forward?*

7:30 Group Reports

7:50 Next Steps: Building Partnerships for Action

8:20 Closing and Adjourn

GROUND RULES FOR DISCUSSION

Have respectful discussions. Speak openly and honestly. Explore differences by listening carefully and respectfully to each person. Keep comments brief and stay focused on the task.

Those who show up are the right people. The people who choose to commit their time to a discussion group are the right people to be talking about that issue.

Whatever happens is all that could have happened. Allow the conversation to flow freely and be open to unexpected outcomes.

When it's over, it's over. A group doesn't have to meet for the whole evening. When you've addressed all the discussion questions, adjourn and disperse to take part in other conversations.

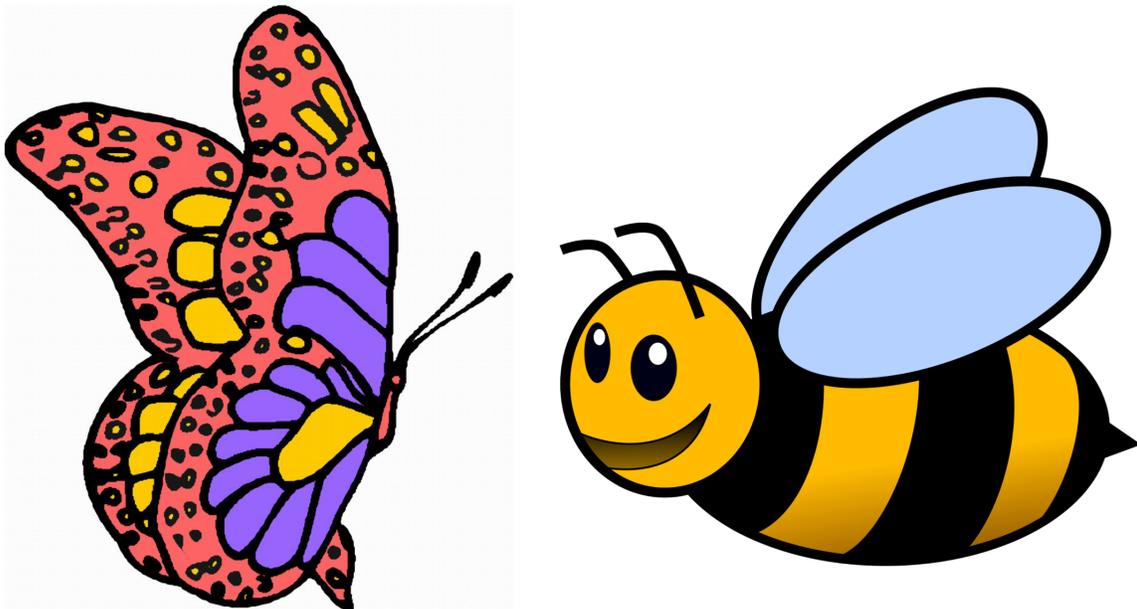
Obey the Law of Two Feet. If you're not interested in a conversation or want to contribute to a different conversation, you are free to move to another discussion group.

The Law of Two Feet



If you're not interested in a conversation or want to contribute to a different conversation, you are free to move to another discussion group.

The Law of Two Feet



Some people may use the law of two feet to move between many groups. Those people are like bumblebees or butterflies; they make valuable contributions by carrying information and ideas between the groups they visit.

Appendix 7: Themes and Groups

Common Themes in Forum Participants' Responses to Question 1:

If we were successful, what would the future look like with regards to the issue your group is discussing?

Discussion Groups	Themes					
	Restored and protected ecosystems throughout the watershed	Increased public access to and use of watershed resources	Resource management accommodates diverse uses / purposes	Watershed residents are more educated and positive about watershed	Structured process or plan for natural resource management	Collaboration among diverse partners
Education		X		X		
Public Use & Access (Group 1)		X	X			
Public Use & Access (Group 2)	X	X	X		X	X
Sedimentation	X					
Stormwater Management				X	X	X
Superfund	X	X		X		
Water Quality	X	X		X		
Watershed Management	X	X		X	X	X
Wildlife & Habitat (Group 1)	X	X	X		X	X
Wildlife & Habitat (Group 2)	X	X	X	X		X

Appendix 7: Themes and Groups
 Common Themes in Forum Participants' Responses to Question 2:
Why is this issue important to you?

	Themes				
	Valued connections exist between the local environment, history, and culture	Our actions on these issues affect our quality of life	Our actions affect the integrity of ecosystems in the lake watershed	Our actions affect public perceptions of region	Our actions affect our ability to meet our goals for watershed's future
Discussion Groups					
Education		X	X		
Public Use & Access (Group 1)	X	X			
Public Use & Access (Group 2)		X			X
Sedimentation	X	X	X		
Stormwater Management		X	X		X
Superfund	X	X			
Water Quality		X	X	X	
Watershed Management		X	X	X	X
Wildlife & Habitat (Group 1)					
Wildlife & Habitat (Group 2)	X	X	X		

Appendix 7: Themes and Groups

Common Themes in Forum Participants' Responses to Question 3:

In thinking about this issue, what are the major problems and concerns today?

	Themes							
Discussion Groups	Watershed environment has been degraded	Environmental damage negatively affects watershed residents	Onondaga Lake Superfund site is not being adequately cleaned up	Need for holistic approach to watershed issues	Need long-term planning in watershed management	Difficult to reconcile many different stakeholders and interests	Financing the costs of watershed management	Need for public to be educated, get involved, and change relationship with the watershed
Education				X		X		X
Public Use & Access (Group 1)						X	X	X
Public Use & Access (Group 2)	X				X	X	X	
Sedimentation	X	X		X	X	X	X	
Stormwater Management	X	X			X		X	X
Superfund	X	X	X		X		X	
Water Quality	X		X				X	X
Watershed Management				X		X	X	X
Wildlife & Habitat (Group 1)								
Wildlife & Habitat (Group 2)	X		X	X			X	X

Appendix 7: Themes and Groups
 Common Themes in Forum Participants' Responses to Question 4:
What are the next steps for making your hopes a reality?

Discussion Groups	Themes				
	Research: Bring together existing knowledge and gather additional information	Decide on specific goals and strategies to guide watershed management	Create a watershed management process or group	Acquire funding to support future projects	Public education / communication / direct participation
Education			X		X
Public Use & Access (Group 1)		X	X	X	X
Public Use & Access (Group 2)	X	X	X		
Sedimentation	X	X	X	X	
Stormwater Management				X	X
Superfund			X		X
Water Quality	X	X			X
Watershed Management	X		X	X	X
Wildlife & Habitat (Group 1)	X	X	X		X
Wildlife & Habitat (Group 2)	X	X			

Appendix 7: Themes and Groups

Common Themes in Forum Participants' Responses to Question 5:

Who should work on this issue and how do you want to be involved in moving forward?

	Themes				
Discussion Groups	Watershed management should be coordinated by a council or unified committee	Expert professionals and agencies should be involved	Onondaga Nation, United States federal, New York State, Onondaga County and local municipal leaders should be informed and involved	Watershed residents should be educated and involved	Forum participants interested in continuing dialogue and taking action
Education	X	X	X	X	
Public Use & Access (Group 1)		X	X	X	
Public Use & Access (Group 2)	X	X	X	X	X
Sedimentation	X	X	X	X	
Stormwater Management		X		X	
Superfund		X		X	
Water Quality	X		X	X	X
Watershed Management		X	X	X	
Wildlife & Habitat (Group 1)					
Wildlife & Habitat (Group 2)		X	X	X	

**Notes from Discussion Groups at
Watershed Community Connections,
June 18th, 2012**

Contents

1. Water Quality.....	2
2. Stormwater Management.....	4
3. Sedimentation	6
4. Watershed Management.....	8
5. Public Use & Access (Group 1).....	10
6. Public Use & Access (Group 2).....	13
7. Superfund.....	15
8. Education	17
9. Wildlife & Habitat (Group 1)	20
10. Wildlife & Habitat (Group 2)	24

Water Quality

Q1. *If we were successful, what would the future look like with regards to this issue?*

- Clean water
- Take grandkids swimming
- Edible fish
- Water quality good enough to support native fish
 - Cold water species
 - Bass, trout, salmon, brook trout, white fish, sturgeon
- Clear water – not muddy
- Diverse, thriving water habitat
- Indigenous plants used during restoration
 - Cattails, wild rice
- Lack of bacteria
 - No sewage inputs
 - No more overflow
 - Fix leaking sewers
 - Agricultural runoff – fix farms & CAFOS
- Pay more attention to fresh water springs, salt springs in city (nobody seems to know they're there)
- Encourage/change public attitude to muskrats
- Tributary specific restoration efforts, focus on specific sub watersheds
- Educate smaller farmers about run-off
- Ensure clean-up continues beyond Honeywell
- Clean sediments in tributaries

Q2. *Why is this issue important to you?*

- Impacts quality of life – enjoy our natural resources
- Oppressive smell harming image of Syracuse
- Ecological balance
- Would make Syracuse inviting to outsiders
- Shed image of rustbelt town

Q3. *In thinking about this issue, what are the major problems and concerns today?*

- Not cleaning up the entire lake – inadequate agreements. “letting them [Honeywell] off easy”
- The cap isn't enough
- Decaying sewer system – no money to fix the problem, no regulatory (law enforcement) will power to enforce
- Farms big source of bacteria – no enforcement
- Demands can only be made on bigger farms
- Give small farmers incentives to be better stewards
- Availability & education (for farmers?)
- Streams have been channelized – piped underground

- Habitat removed, encourages urban corridors, sewers, overflow pipes
- Streams not allowed to act as natural filter
- People acting with wrong motives, values
- Water seen as dumping ground, not life-sustaining entity
- Mud boils

Q4. *What are the next steps for making your hopes a reality?*

- Research – how does mining in Tully gravel pits affect water quality to the north
- Remediate (dredge, cap) before habitat restoration can begin
- Educate small farmers about stewardship (minimize effect of fertilization)
- Collect raw figures – what is the impact of proposed projects? Standardized response
- Work for more public access to lake – make people aware of resources available at different locations
- Develop plans to restore Atlantic Salmon
- Gauge water quality – how do we compare to other areas? (vs. US examples, developing nations)
- Get an answer to the question: where do we stand?
- Work to change people’s attitudes about Onondaga Lake

Q5. *Who should work on this issue and how do you want to be involved?*

- Attract or draw senators to draft a bill
- Onondaga Lake Watershed Council/Partnership is ending.
- Centralize groups, unify voices, regard water quality as a whole
- Create one citizens advisory council (does it exist?)
- Encourage Federal Senators to continue Onondaga Lake Partnership
- Add Onondaga Nation to the Onondaga Lake Partnership
- Citizens should be included
- Continue dialogue
- Get articles published in newspapers
- Don’t wait for next meeting to act
- Increase # of projects in the inner city to raise awareness
- Create centralized group responsible for writing to law makers
- Use social media to our advantage
- Disseminate information better
- Meet again to ACT (write letters, etc)
- Participate in restoration process
- Create communication channel for meeting participants
- Share today’s findings/discussions with community groups (church groups, etc)
- Individuals should take personal responsibility
- Continue erecting visible reminders (like entering Onondaga Lake Watershed signs)
- Emulate “Save the Rain” community-based model
- Centralize operations in a way that’s accessible to citizens, restore public confidence in lake management

Stormwater Management

Index Cards

- CSO (combined sewage overflow) that discharges eventually into the lake
- The smell of Onondaga Creek
- Bacteria from the leaking sewers (dry weather)
- Green infrastructure
- Phosphorous (waste & stormwater)
- Preservation of public access to the water and connectivity for both human and wildlife activity

Q1. *If we were successful, what would the future look like with regards to this issue?*

- Consistent maintenance and funding source
 - Practitioner brought up the idea that maintenance and funding is not unlike how parks are maintained and funded, however, there needs to be citizen involvement. He used the Avery Avenue Rain Garden as an example regarding this topic.
- Continuation of the OCP program beyond 2018
 - Several ideas branched off this such as momentum needed in the community, a need to change the faces of the neighborhoods, and mutual benefits needed between the community and the county.
- A need exists for a centralized contact for issues regarding stormwater management
- A need exists for continuing/developing education
 - Save the Rain and Young Ecos were two organizations brought up regarding this topic.

Q2. *Why is this issue important to you?*

- It affects the quality of life
- Because people live throughout the watershed
- A want to open the creek for future use (recreation)
- Stormwater management is a financial issue
- We need to keep water clean
- Because stormwater means untouched
- Stormwater management needs to be responsible
- It affects your daily water use

Q3. *In thinking about this issue, what are the major problems and concerns today?*

- Stormwater management needs to be fully addressed
- People need to understand the impacts of stormwater
- We need to get people to care
- The odor from the creek needs to be addressed (especially strong on summer days)
 - Is there a way we can connect this issue with green infrastructure to inform/educate about how green infrastructure can alleviate the odor problem?
- People need to understand that a lag time exists before green infrastructure will show its benefits

- There needs to be more education and outreach in the community
- How will new industry be affected by this issue?
 - Will companies want to come here and in turn provide jobs if this issue is not addressed?
 - How will it affect green infrastructure?
- We need to get the sewage out of the creek
- No dumping in the creek
- We need funding and where will that funding come from?
- Maintenance is needed
- We need to address FEMA flood insurance issue
 - Maybe FEMA can wait for green infrastructure to show its benefits before they start charging for flood insurance in areas that were not considered to be in a flood zone prior to the most recent floodplain assessment.

Q4. *What are the next steps for making your hopes a reality?*

- Education
 - Start within the local community and build from there
- Community benefits
 - Need to create an economic opportunity for community which will in turn give the community a connection to stormwater management
- We need to resonate through the generations
- We need to include educators in the process
- We need to think holistically
 - An example was brought up of having a small group of people picking up litter which will help with pollution/run-off while giving an opportunity to educate about stormwater management
- A new question arose at this point in the conversation: How do you get the message out to the public?
 - Service learning
 - Simplify the issue...simplify the language so that everyone can understand
 - Better communication
 - There is a need to celebrate the watershed and the community in order to get people excited and feel connected
- There is a realization that there is not a “one size fits all” approach
 - Different people feel differently about the issue and the watershed
 - All minorities are not equal
 - Some people may feel left out
- There should be monitoring for minority federal grant

Q5. *Who should work on this issue and how do you want to be involved?*

- The ones that are getting paid should be the ones to work on this issue
- Most, if not all, of the group felt they were involved so the question of how to get others involved arose (how do you bridge the gap to get others involved?)
 - Partnership groups
 - Public participation

Sedimentation

Index Cards

- Mudslides (creek) sediment
- Clarity – Lake/ Creek; sedimentation – Onondaga Creek
- Mudboils – what is the current status?
- Mudboils – the rest of the story; creek sediment

Q1. *If we were successful, what would the future look like with regards to this issue?*

- Clarify the Creek water
- Separate the Creek from the influence of mudboils
- Locate the Creek channel with consideration of the tributaries
- Understanding of how/ where mudboils form
- Prevent the formation of mudboils
- Use dams to control sediment flow and relieve artesian pressure
- Create wetlands to remediate sediments
- Promote vegetation with high salinity tolerance
- Restore natural habitat, fisheries, and stream cover
- Land/ farmland protection
- Clarify the water throughout the lower Creek

Q2. *Why is this issue important to you?*

- Mudboils have taken away Creek as a resource
- Cultural resource lost
- Lost fishing opportunity
 - Change in species
- Need to clean for other future opportunities
- Increased flood risk and impact on city (FEMA) and residents
- Carries sediment into the Lake

Q3. *In thinking about this issue, what are the major problems and concerns today?*

- See Question 2
- Who has financial and management responsibility for future action?
- Cost issues
- The Lake is currently undergoing remediation, but Creek is still causing sedimentation and turbidity
- Focus on the Lake is taking from the focus on the Upper Creek and Onondaga Nation
- No quick fixes – concentrate on finding a good, long-term solution
 - Coordinate funding and pool resources
- Are governments going to work together effectively?
- Identifying the resources and pollution sources to develop a comprehensive watershed management plan and making sure the information goes to the correct agency (USDA?)

Q4. *What are the next steps for making your hopes a reality?*

- Bring together the current knowledge and information and determine what we need to know
- Break down jurisdictional boundaries and make sure many groups and stakeholders are involved
- Collect ideas from all interested parties
- Develop a common goal
- Onondaga Nation can evaluate ways to help
- Acknowledge that the Lake cannot be cleaned up without addressing the cleanup of the Creek
- Find funds
- Work with various affected property owners
- Natural and environmental issues
- Identify similar sites throughout the country
- Understand geology
- Understand the history

Q5. *Who should work on this issue and how do you want to be involved?*

- NYSDEC
- USEPA
- Onondaga Nation
- Dave Knapp
- Honeywell
- OEI
- OLP
- NOON
- USGS
- USACE
- (all these groups need to collaborate)
- USEPA has webinars (learning resource)
- Advocating and facilitating
- Creek watershed group or council
- Reconvene Onondaga Creek Revitalization Working group
- Find USEPA NEPA study and follow up!
- Involve schools and children
 - Volunteer days
 - Field trips
- DEC should issue a request for proposals

Watershed Management

Index Cards

- The purpose of tonight's meeting is to identify critical issues for Onondaga Lake, and to identify potential funding sources so improvement can be made
- Transition Lake and Watershed Management from Federal-State agencies to County and Local administration
- The future of cooperative watershed management
- Lake use management, how?
- Projects
- Watershed sign locations

Q1. *If we were successful, what would the future look like with regards to this issue?*

- Stream remediation- large contribution of sedimentation into Lake
- What organizational structure will be in place after OLP funding ends? Do we need something for the future?
- Management of Lake use
- Protection of Otisco Lake: drinking water supply, concerns about Natural Gas development
- No commercialism (buildings) around perimeter of Lake, maintain park like setting
- Bring together interested parties, focus on collaboration and have local control
- A new watershed tax is a possible future funding source
- Identify and promote watershed boundaries as planning units
- Create a management plan for Nine mile Creek
- Increase Onondaga Creek access
- Onondaga County should take over management but municipalities should be actively involved
- There should be a county board with a representative from each municipalities, an example is that of Skaneateles Lake agricultural program
- It is essential that citizens and government are working together, other examples of watershed organization are the Oneida Lake Association and Otisco Lake preservation association
- There should be better involvement with underrepresented citizen groups
- The suggested watershed board should have legal authority
- There needs to be an educational transition period to the watershed board, and this is important if you're going to consider raising taxes

Q2. *Why is this issue important to you?*

- Local connections, would love to be able to swim in the Lake again
- Want to fish in Lake (and eat the fish!)
- Protect drinking water
- A clean Lake will help inspire regional growth
- Remove negative image of Onondaga Lake
- Keep local environment as clean as we keep our homes

- Onondaga Creek clean up-focus needs to be on restoration
- Corrective management of entire watershed will help improve Lake quickly

Q3. *In thinking about this issue, what are the major problems and concerns today?*

- Costs and a plan to go with it
- We need a comprehensive plan
- Political issues between government and community groups need to be resolved
- Conflicts between interested parties
- Remove barriers to creek access, including the fence along Onondaga creek in the City
 - Educate the public regarding access and proper use if access is increased
- Create and improve public access through arrangements with private owners of land adjacent to the creeks
- Make information on watershed more accessible, facilitate community involvement in cleanup i.e., offer incentives for environmental restoration
- Increase public investment/interest in protecting watershed and caring about your local environment (the WHOLE watershed)
- Form connections between people and the environment

Q4. *What are the next steps for making your hopes a reality?*

- Provide an annual map depicting pollution hotspots
 - This can help focus funding and secure grants
- Use what we already have in place, there is project watershed
- Look into other successful projects (Bronx river)
- Include a volunteer base
- Make the idea of Lake cleanup understandable to the local community
- Pull local existing groups into watershed board (or association) to increase collaboration
- Don't isolate the towns from the City
- Existing community groups should begin to collaborate with government agencies as just another collaborator
- Change the perception of what a watershed is using a watershed map
- Organize the community groups represented here tonight

Q5. *Who should work on this issue and how do you want to be involved?*

- Current community groups
- City/towns/Onondaga Nation/County/DEC/EPA
- Army Corps of Engineers were suggested too, but not as the lead agency involved
- Work with local nursery and other businesses and farmers to promote sustainable watershed practices
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- Involve school districts
- Funding to support a community representative to publish newsletters, reports etc.

Public Use & Access (Group 1)

Index Cards

- How to develop west shoreline of lake near the west shore trail
- Future uses on and around the lake
- Keep the entire perimeter of lake as park, do not allow commercial development
- Improved and free access to water fronts
- Complete the loop the lake trail and add boating access
- Interconnected trail systems
- Preserve public access to the water and increase connectivity for both humans and wildlife
- Remove barriers to use: pollutants, transportation infrastructure (highways + rail corridors)

Q1. *If we were successful, what would the future look like with regards to this issue?*

- Take advantage of connectivity of waterways (e.g., Erie Canal, Seneca) – recreation, people can travel on water, lake cruises to Onondaga
- Access: walkways, waterfront, recreational land use, no keys or gates!, highway and roads with signs for parking and walkways
- Connection to multi modes of transportation
- Roads: keep public infrastructure public, and turn private to public along waterways
- Fishing w/out release: boat access and launch, walk-in creeks, healthy access
- Balance: access and healthy environment i.e. walkways away from shoreline
- Accessibility for disabled
- Access to streams and shoreline fishing

Q2. *Why is this issue important to you?*

- Promote connection/responsibility
- Better for everyone, positive economic impact
- Education enhances – with access you can see progress, teach children about nature by using waterfront, teach history of lake and watershed
- Safety precautions, multi-lingual health advisory signs
- Window to past and future
- History: pollution, industrial use, evolution of lake, culture, “before Syracuse”

Q3. *In thinking about this issue, what are the major problems and concerns today?*

- Lake shifting from sense of shame to pride: how do we promote that?
- Too many stakeholders, makes it difficult to reach agreements and collaborate
- Loop the Lake: railroad, Park St. area, physical infrastructure, ownership/jurisdiction (mall, city, CSX, Honeywell)
- Privatization, commercialization
- Connectivity through city/Erie Blvd, canal
- Funding
- Liability

- Balance between access & restoration
- Public expectations, want to see results too quickly. This makes it hard to get support and requires extra explanation

Q4. *What are the next steps for making your hopes a reality?*

- Need money! Grant applications
- End goal is clear (loop the lake trail), but it's a multistep process
- Must have a shovel-ready plan so we can acquire funding once it's available
- Need to wait for clean-up efforts before we can have more access, it's a couple of year process
- Inter-municipal agreements (funding through Dept. of State for joint planning/collaboration efforts)
- Bike infrastructure
- Evaluation of current assets (partnerships, identify who is doing what? Connectivity options)
- Jr. high students visioning projects for watershed (ex. Creekwalk-type project)
- Signs!!
- Increase public participation to increase sense of public responsibility
- Advertising
- Update the Wikipedia page for Onondaga Lake

Q5a. *Who should work on this issue?*

- Municipal leaders
- Community leaders
- Dept. of State (funding for inter-municipal agreements)
- Syr. Metropolitan Transportation Council
- K-12 students (they teach parents!)
- Schools
- Citizens
- Property owners (inc. CSX)
- Onondaga County Parks
- Onondaga Earth Corps
- Universities!! They can help with outreach (student projects)

Q5b. *How do you want to be involved?*

- Learn from Bronx River example: grassroots efforts, habitat restoration, h2o monitoring
- Onondaga Earth Corps: restoration by youth, looking for youth employees and adult leaders, volunteers
- County Parks facilitate programs for volunteers, you can contact the Parks if you want to start a project

Bonus Question: How do we get the word out/reach everybody else?

- Internet
- Signs near dredging project – Rt. 690
- Post-Standard “Neighbors” section, weekly spot with updates on watershed

- Bill Lansing (Parks Director) on TV
- Social media, “like” Onondaga Lake (park already has this for recreational activities, not as much on lake updates)
- Call to action needed
- Wikipedia updates

Public Use & Access (Group 2)

Q1. *If we were successful, what would the future look like with regards to this issue?*

- Currently, there is no comprehensive long term conservation plan. This is needed in future.
 - Such a plan should hold parties accountable for meeting specific goals, and it should be science-based
- Preservation of the west shore of the lake
 - This process should include the Onondaga Nation in planning and decisions
- Preserve natural areas and wildlife
- There should be an area on the west shore of the lake that offers a good view of the lake
- Maintain safety and security
- Accommodation of diverse recreational uses
 - there should be more access points in the southern part of the watershed
 - there should be a pedestrian connection to the Erie Canal (walking paths)
 - there should be signage to orient the public
- Balance public use and conservation
- 95% of County's lakeshore property should remain undeveloped (but accommodate recreation)

Q2. *Why is this issue important to you?*

- It's important to have a comprehensive plan because it is needed to preserve a unique resource.
- It's important to have a comprehensive plan because it would provide clarity of vision and a consistent approach.
- People need to be able to use the shoreline safely.
- Need to consider ease of maintenance
- Need to define which uses are allowed in specific areas

Q3. *In thinking about this issue, what are the major problems and concerns today?*

- Funding for maintenance
- Existing contamination
- There is no long term plan
- Need to limit public access in order to protect wetlands
- There is a conflict between use and preservation
 - There are varying definitions of what constitutes preservation
 - Need to maintain existing and return habitat for wildlife
- Need to identify endangered species that might exist around Onondaga Lake

Q4. *What are the next steps for making your hopes a reality?*

- Identify core groups to be involved in developing a comprehensive plan
 - Understand desires and needs of those parties
- Need to better understand wetlands and how to protect them
- Need to understand the value to the lake of specific uses/decisions (i.e. how specific uses/decisions affect the lake)

- Examine how boat launches will impact use of lake and surrounding areas
- Consider potential for lakeshore development (e.g. restaurants, shops – the kinds of amenities that will make people think this is a nice area).

Q5a. *Who should work on this issue?*

- ASLF
- Ninemile Creek Conservation Council
- Onondaga Nation
- Trout Unlimited
- Sierra Club
- SUNY-ESF
- Interested parties in the community
- Who should make the decisions? What is the governance? Some ideas:
 - have an inclusive process
 - form a committee to develop the plan, then ask the public to vote on the plan

Q5b. *How do you want to be involved?*

- Would like to share ideas for use
- Would like opportunities for group brainstorming
- Would like more meetings, and in a quieter environment

Superfund

Index Cards

- Murphy's Island Clean-up
- Make Lake Water Drinkable and Fish Edible
- Remediation of Harbor Brook
- Air Quality- Citizen Notification
- Dredging the Lake
- Protect the Lake from Toxic Materials

Q1. *If we were successful, what would the future look like with regards to this issue?*

- Drinkable water
- Non-toxic fish
- Swimmable water
- Ensure air quality
- Raise public awareness
- Ensure community safety/ enforce health standards
- Leverage technology for cleaning

Q2. *Why is this issue important to you?*

- Economic viability of areas surrounding lake
- Public health
- Symbolic/cultural significance
- Aesthetic (smell, look)

Q3. *In thinking about this issue, what are the major problems and concerns today?*

- Odor
- Waste by-products (dredge)
- 9-Mile Creek/ delta and lake creek areas
- General Motors (GM) run-off
- Need work to place a cap on lake bottom as a long-term large project – need capping technology
- Concern over sustainability of lake
- No steady stream of funding in bad/volatile economy
- Misuse of money by government and contractors (i.e. Honeywell)
- Poor compliance with EPA legal standards
- EPA standards not set at appropriate levels
- Smell near 690 interstate highway from chemicals like petroleum waste, benzene, etc.; need to move beyond temporary fixes
- Concern over chemical vapors released from water
- Waste beds are located too close to cities/towns and cause public health issues (i.e. asthma)
- Need for Honeywell and local government to stay on schedule because they have a Federal mandate to perform the work; but balance efficiency with high-quality results

BUT:

- Weather is unpredictable
- Work halts during Winter months
- Rainy season can slow progress of typical April-November work period
- The Dept. of Environmental Conservation (DEC) is using new technology to clean water associated with the lake (i.e. geotextile tubes)

Q4. What are the next steps for making your hopes a reality?

- Encourage Citizen Engagement
- Maintain momentum
- Promote transparency and accountability
- Create citizen workgroups
- Promote public education about the “hot spots”
- Target the “right people” who are interested
- Change the negative citizen perceptions
- Maintain Momentum for the Long-Haul
- Cleaning the lake will be a perpetual process and an inter-generational issue

Q5. Who should work on this issue and how do you want to be involved?

- Legally-mandated organizations
- Honeywell
- Onondaga Lake Partnership (OLP)
 - expiring status in 2014
 - funding ends in Sept 2012
- What will be a good OLP replacement?
 - DEC/ EPA/ Count → Devolve responsibility to citizen bodies
 - *Question: Where will the Federal funding go after it expires?*
- Citizen groups may form creative ideas but they are not used.
- Best practices are being overlooked.
- Need to overcome politics, but how?
- Need to promote environment justice; include poor communities usually left out of the dialogue

Education

Index Cards

- Sustainability!! Education
- How will the community's negative attitude about lake be changed? (e.g. the comments re: 3-eyed fish)

Q1. *If we were successful, what would the future look like with regards to this issue?*

- People's attitudes towards and perceptions of the watershed would be changed.
- Fears and misconceptions (such as the three-eyed fish) would be negated.
- The watershed would be repurposed with an emphasis on usability.
- There would be a strong sense of community ownership, as the watershed would be a point of pride and play a cultural role for families and the community at large, as it was in the past.

Q2. *Why is this issue important to you?*

- Properties along Onondaga Creek, in some areas, are not viewed as waterfront property; instead, the creek is viewed as a "toilet bowl". This reflects the lack of pride in people's communities. Education, then, should incorporate community building.
- There is a generational gap. Some younger folk do understand the importance of the lake, and it is the older generation (in their 40s) who think that the lake cannot get better. Sometimes the parents know about the status of the watershed, and it is up to them to help educate the kids. In short, there is unequal education about the watershed.
- We have both an ethical and a moral responsibility to protect and conserve the watershed (and the fish and wildlife within & around it). We also need to change our attitudes & way we interact with the watershed.
- We need to think about the future & how our children can enjoy the watershed.
- Natural resources are already scarce, and will become a greater issue in the future.
- The watershed was a source of enjoyment and a part of daily life and community culture in the past. I want it to be so again in the future.
- The watershed also represents an opportunity to improve our quality of life.

Q3. *In thinking about this issue, what are the major problems and concerns today?*

- Who takes leadership for the watershed and education efforts? Who takes ownership of related projects? There have been many different overseeing groups in regards to the lake, but many have failed. The most successful have been grassroots efforts. Some groups have held private meetings, which inhibit the education component (lesson: have a more open management). Relatedly, education should be centralized to have a common voice, but there were some concerns with having a centralized system, such as not having a diverse enough governing body.
- Another concern is ensuring that the efforts for education are coordinated. Yet another is that the information distributed may not be reliable, as it may come from a company that has a vested interest.

- Another question raised was: what is the role of universities & other places of higher education for educating citizens about the watershed? ESF already does some education, but other institutions can take a more active role.
- The watershed, as an issue, is a huge problem with multiple components and facets. It is hard to consider all of them.
- Another concern was the quality of the water and its effect on people, as well as how people affect the quality of the water. A major challenge identified was the cultural shift in how people view and interact with the watershed. An added concern was the long-term impact of this link between water quality and people's behaviors.
- An additional challenge is getting greater engagement and participation from citizens on watershed issues.

Q4. *What are the next steps for making your hopes a reality?*

- A targeted, intensive, multi-pronged approach needs to be taken. People need to be presented with a singular picture of the issue because it is so multifaceted, it is difficult to understand. Multiple generations should be engaged, not only presented with information but also get interactive, hands-on experience.
- Video game or other virtual interactive way to introduce people to the watershed
- Videos about lake cleanup, the state of the watershed
- A live wildlife webcam so people can see that wildlife live there (can also be used for general environmental education)
- Elementary school field trips
- Incorporating education into school curriculum
- Social media
- Community cleanup efforts
- Having a community calendar of events featuring, on, or near the watershed
- Testimonials from people who have used or are using the watershed for various purposes (e.g. recreationally), to build trust in the quality of the water
- Having art projects or contests related to the watershed
- Using historical postcards & photos to demonstrate what the watershed had been used for in the past, what its impact was on democracy and daily life, and how it looked in years past. This can help people visualize what it could be in the future.
- Tables and other events at the state fair
- Creating a 'Friends of Onondaga Lake/Watershed' group to encourage community building and generate awareness
- Holding a science fair related to the watershed
- Kiosks to promote visual learning, such as information about current water quality near the kiosk
- Promoting efforts for both the community and family to learn together, especially through interactive and hands-on opportunities
- Creating a youth conservation corps, such as the Brooklyn River cleanup effort
- Engage Boy & Girl Scouts in cleanup, conservation, education, and awareness efforts
- Provide both annual and regular reports and updates of the status of the watershed
- Create a watershed management group to both manage the watershed and educate citizens

- Foster grassroots efforts to cleanup, protect, and conserve the watershed and educate the public and build awareness about surrounding issues
- Public signs about and around the lake, creek, etc. to demonstrate what is part of the watershed to create a comprehensive picture of the watershed and its relation to people's lives
- Use all media forms, including print, radio, TV, etc.
- Create a museum about the lake and watershed
- Create apps, such as a walking tour, information about invasive species, and recreational options

Q5. *Who should work on this issue and how do you want to be involved?*

- The entire community should be involved, including families, churches, community leaders, municipalities and other government bodies, businesses, local non-profits, and schools. The Scouts can also get involved. A watershed management body should work on the issue. FOCUS' Citizens Academy can help educate and build awareness.

Wildlife & Habitat (Group 1)

Index Cards

- Invasive species
- Promote life
- Coldwater fishery – Native species
- Habitat restoration
- Lake ecology
- Remediation action in Onondaga Lake with reference to wildlife
- Beautification and maintenance of the (lake's) westside. Patrols to make sure crime doesn't enter suburbs via creek walk.
- Eagles
- Stream restoration
- Biodiversity, clean water
- Habitat and wildlife. Fishing and clean water for wildlife. Public access. Clean water to swim, fish, and boat in.
- Using native species in all restoration projects planned for the watershed (including cultural significant species).
- Conserve natural areas.
- Habitat
- Native fish restoration
- Wildlife toxicology

Q1. *If we were successful, what would the future look like with regards to this issue?*

- Do No Harm: Don't lose the natural resource values that are already there, for example wildlife sightings along Onondaga Lake shoreline on Liverpool side, and unlike the creekwalk, which removed shade trees, further constricted creek, added non-native plantings. For example: as lake becomes more popular destination point, maintain wetland and upland habitat structure as much as possible.
- Native species in natural/native habitats
 - Can't bring back/sustain all but it was desired that the watershed support as many as possible with natural/native/healthy habitats
 - Dare to dream – challenge obstacles, think outside box
 - Think long term to accomplish the hard things, not just short term/easy improvements and consider the hard things impossible
 - Restore native plants such as wild rice in the tributary/riparian wetlands – Landis has knowledge of historical plant conditions
 - Restore birds – wooded riparian corridor and shoreline
 - Consider effects of noise on birds that rely on calls for breeding--- i.e., consider not only physicochemical habitat matrix but sound disturbance. Trains, motorboats, roads e.g. 690 and NYS Thruway closely hem the lakeshores, noise 24/7. Consider tree sound barriers or manmade walls as in European urban areas, to buffer sound and provide habitat, consider seasonal restrictions on boats to protect bird breeding periods , and/or limit motorized boat use

- Fisheries – let habitat potential drive restoration/recovery, not special interests such as anglers or government resistance, evaluate potential for coldwater fishes but in realistic context of other issues such as climate change, exotics etc
- Consider species of greatest risk e.g. specific bird species – facilitator suggested that we spend time identifying specific species but the group did not feel that was productive – not helpful for fisheries and the view was expressed that Honeywell has already done that extensively. Audubon has identified Birds of Conservation Priority based on historical bird count and citizen science data. We discussed whether Honeywell plan adequately planned for lake future:
 - Some thought the Honeywell plan did adequately plan for the lake future. The point was made that the habitat plan is detailed, ambitious, and utilizes a great deal of professional and community/public input. It goes far beyond the removal of toxic sediments, and treats habitat in very professional fashion. This should not be ignored as we seek input on the lake’s future, because it represents the summation of a great deal of knowledge and effort. The fact that Honeywell funded this does not at all mean it is their work; academic, private and corporate entities worked together creating this plan, which also has a large assessment component.
 - Some thought the Honeywell Plan did not adequately plan for the lake’s future because it was done within a limited context and focuses on recreation. A critique was made that the plan is more of a short-term response post-remediation, i.e. to bring largely the same assemblage of fauna back. It does represent an extraordinary first step, but hopefully not the last. If you have a long term goal, you can at least make short term steps to reach that goal, adapting as you go to the current realities. For example, Red winged blackbirds and mallards are named in the plan as target species but are not very ambitious in terms of "restoration"-- they are ubiquitous species that nest almost anywhere. The plan also mentions common tern, and a shorebird or two, but the aim seemed low. There IS room for a wider discussion of long term, "seventh generation" goals for biota and water quality and habitat generally.
- With acceptable identified target species, work with wildlife/habitat experts and community in developing and implementing an adaptive management plan that focuses on strategies that reduce threats to species of conservation priority.
- Bronx River example cited as good goal – bring back as much as possible recognizing other limitations/interests
- Need to balance interests – achieve multiple-use management
 - We recognized ecological/native species goals weren’t only interest, needed to be balanced with other interests e.g. recreation, private landowner rights, etc
 - But, some felt voices for ecological/native restoration/management goals had not been fully heard e.g. Honeywell plan focuses on recreation at expense of ecological/native perspective
- Restored tributaries -
 - Tributaries are significant source of continued negative impacts on lake, and are valuable resources themselves

- Restore wooded corridors, meanders, remove bed and bank armoring, restore floodway, restore flood regimes if possible, consider whether Onondaga Dam currently harms creek
- Some restoration already happening e.g. lower Ninemile and instream structures in/near Marcellus
- Explore private landowner incentives analogous to USDA CRP/WRP program, to buy land, easements, etc, also pursue vacant public lands e.g., vacant lot program within floodways
- Resolve the toxicity problem: Need toxicity levels to drop so safe for fish, birds (i.e., shouldn't invite piscivorous birds back if fish still have high levels of Hg in fish). Historically, the human relationship to animals & plants was one of use, handling, barefoot wading, fishing, swimming, and eating-- Safely! Lake was local food source, and possibly some day could be again
- Protect overall ecological integrity of the watershed.
- Create, not destroy, cover on creek walk
- Plant creek walk and other “Riparian Corridors” with native species of trees that provide benefits to a host of goals, including habitat, carbon reduction, and water cooling.
 - Develop a “Riparian Corridor 2020” plan
- Use a greater variety of green building materials. The porous pavement is great, but plants and trees – particularly on roof tops and other places – need to be part of the mix.
 - Recognize the full benefit of plants and trees in terms of habitat, carbon reduction, etc., to justify their cost. It is not just about run-off, in which case the porous pavement looks like the better deal. When you factor in the other benefits, trees and plants can win the cost-benefit battle.
- Align priorities across interest areas. Wildlife restoration requires a cleaner lake. So too does recreation like swimming. Various groups must travel similar paths to reach their goals. Recognizing that and pulling in the same direction will pay off.
- Return tributaries to more natural state.
 - Meanders
 - Forested
- Remove armoring – de-channelize.

Q4: *What are the next steps for making your hopes a reality?*

- Form a watershed group to develop a watershed plan
- Identify and target specific goals e.g. Salmon 2020, Wooded Riparian Corridor 2020 – catchy goals, “bumper sticker” goals
- Integrate and cross-pollinate goals and ideas
 - Some ideas/actions would benefit multiple resources, e.g. continuous, multistrata riparian cover (modeled after natural systems and called for in OC Revitalization Plan) would benefit creek, water quality, lake, birds, bats [and people/aesthetics] Migratory birds & other wildlife use Creeks as travel corridors, for O. Creek-- rare strip of green in midst of urban infrastructure, leave "picture window" and glimpse openings to provide views where needed - groups need to work together, synergize, share ideas and identify shared goals

- Continue to connect natural resources and people – provide access to people to get them involved, e.g. creekwalk, though not perfect (see above) – does allow people to see and engage with creek, see the creek’s problems, get interested – this is important
- Important to inform/reassure public as projects proceed – e.g. concern that projects might affect FEMA insurance, raise rates or otherwise affect adjacent landowners.
Misperceptions can create resistance to projects
- Educate people on flooding to end misperception that FEMA’s new lines have something to do with restoration efforts, when they merely are a result of a new way of calculating the flood plain.
- Connect with public at every opportunity. Programming along the Creek Walk to bring people into contact with the creek and other tributaries.
- Develop incentives to encourage private landowners along the tributaries to plant native species and remove creek armor (i.e., de-channelize)
- A process of evaluative impact: What would do the most good, what is doing the most harm?
 - Noise-boat traffic: “Natural” barriers along 690? A period of no boating during migration?
- Tree canopies to cool water and promote cold-water fishery. Continuous riparian cover.
- Wetland restoration to counter mud boils
- Determine “species of priorities” for fish and plants in the way that Audubon does for birds, and adopt the Audubon list for birds. Some species that were mentioned specifically were the American Black Duck, wild rice varieties, and sweet grass.
- Do no harm – recognize that many species are coming back on their own and resist projects that might negatively impact them. Species doing well include Eagles, many varieties of turtles and fish.
- Think long-term: Cold water fishery may seem far off now, but if we have a longer vision, we can see it is doable.

Wildlife & Habitat (Group 2)

Q1. *If we were successful, what would the future look like with regards to this issue?*

- Natural species restoration, specifically in regards to fisheries
- Restoration of biodiversity
- Reconcile/balance public use with ecosystem health
- More protected areas
- Improve the habitats within the park itself
- Close off sensitive areas and include signage explaining this (i.e. during bird migration and nesting)
- Connect to the surrounding ecosystems
- Animals test free from poison
- Improved fishing, specifically in regards to salmon lots
- Area as an educational resource
- Leave large portions of the shoreline undeveloped
- Community is actively involved in the restoration
- Improve the area, but don't strive for perfection
- Receptive/understanding of the features of our ecosystem today vs. 200 years ago
- Better utilize fish hatchery
- Complete a lake inventory, understand the ecosystem
- More forested areas
- Involve nearby landowners

Q2. *Why is this issue important to you?*

- Central component of our community
- Fulfills the values of the community
- Preserving wildlife
- Put wildlife where it is supposed to be
- Respect what is sacred, correct back to the sacred
- Improve long-term durability, long-term benefits, foresight
- Opportunity to create wildlife habitat and prevent industrialization
- Improve land use considerations
- Use for community pride, change the narrative around the lake
- More potential for learning and investigation in the area
- Unique situation (large lake in an urban area)
- People want to enjoy the lake, area
- Nature in conjunction with the city

Q3. *In thinking about this issue, what are the major problems and concerns today?*

- Reluctance by regulators to restore the area fully
- Political pressure to downgrade the future of the lake clean up (do the minimum)
- Lack of awareness about improvements that have been made
- 690 produces terrible noise in the area
- Lack of funding for connecting the lake clean up to the larger ecosystem and community

- Code and zoning challenges
- Lack of understanding/interest in the benefits of restoration

Q4. *What are the next steps for making your hopes a reality?*

- Code changes (different vegetation, water temperature)
- Reclassify the lake to make it more protective
- Improve toxicity levels, change MCL
- Continue to create new wetlands
- Remove invasive species
- Examine the ownership of area properties to determine what zoning/code changes need to take place to improve connectivity
- Improve boat cleaning facilities, and mandate/enforce cleaning
- Leave some areas for mother nature to restore herself
- Investigate natural cover options, let the land heal itself
- Utilize historical data on the watershed

Q5. *Who should work on this issue and how do you want to be involved?*

- DEC should continue toxicity analysis
- ESF students
- Make more connections to the Native American Community
- Preserve histories of lake among community
- Elected officials need to be held accountable
- Involve more players in handoff of lake restoration
- Increase ownership among community
- Increase public usage
- Experts conducting continual research
- Increase student involvement
- Industries continued involvement in restoration (especially Honeywell)
- Metro area
- Public schools