



Chautauqua Current No. 15

Chautauqua Lake & Watershed Management Alliance, Inc.
October 24, 2022



Figure 1. Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy Director of Conservation Dr. Twan Leenders speaks at the PRISM Invasive Species Symposium at Buffalo State University.

Wrap-Up

Fall Events Review Lake, Watershed Programs

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When leaves start to fall and boats begin to exit the waters of Chautauqua Lake, stakeholders from around the region take the time to meet up and review all of the programs that took place on our waterways over the past year. Now that we have the pandemic in the rearview mirror, many of these annual conferences and meetings have thankfully resumed after being postponed or held digitally. As we look to assess the actions that were taken to improve our environment for both people and wildlife, and all of the data that were generated over the course of the field season, these events are important venues to collaborate with and learn from our peers.

Last Tuesday, the Western New York Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM) hosted its Invasive Species Symposium at SUNY Buffalo State, which is home to the Great Lakes Center. WNYPRISM was established in 2014 and is now one of eight New York State regional partnerships seeking to better understand and minimize the harm caused by invasive plant and animal species. Over the course of the day, partners spoke about some of the many different adaptive

management approaches that are in use across the region on both land and water, and what we can learn from their successes and failures.

WNYPRISM Director Dr. Christopher Pennuto and Coordinator Andrea Locke began the conference with opening remarks and general discussion of how and why so many different organizations are involved with managing the influx of invasive species. Key attributes of any good invasive species management plan include honest assessment of goals, reducing uncertainty with better data, clear and objective monitoring protocols, as well as analysis and communication of data. In her presentation, Locke emphasized the point that invasive species management is by its nature a reactive process, but there are many specific steps that we can take in order to be better prepared for new and emerging challenges.

Many of the tenets and goals of adaptive management outlined in these early presentations were put into real-world context by the day's remaining symposium speakers. Dr. Andrew Lance is a restoration ecologist working with the Western New York Land Conservancy on a number of different projects in Western New York, including five sites in Chautauqua County. Dr. David Spiering is the Great Lakes Habitat Restoration Coordinator for the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. Both Lance and Spiering offered presentations on specific projects undertaken in the Buffalo area to combat invasive species, improve habitat for native plants and animals, and the challenges involved. A common theme of these presentations was that each particular site is unique with respect to its plant and animal life. In order to implement a plan to eradicate or manage an invasive species that will produce long-term results, managers have to work with what they are given. It was emphasized that in the real world things do not always go as planned. Some adaptive management plans work better than others, and there are always variables that are out of our control. The best we can hope for is successive improvement in our understanding of the environment, and learning from the past to do a better job in the future. These lessons hold true whether we are looking to eradicate a patch of Japanese knotweed, or manage populations of water chestnut over the long term.

Funding for the types of programs that are implemented by people like Spiering and Lance is always in need. This was the topic of a presentation given by Jennifer Dunn, a biologist working with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's Great Lakes Watershed Program. Dunn explained how partners working at the local, state and federal level often work together to fund ecological restoration and water quality improvement projects, the guidance documents that steer these efforts, and available funding opportunities. The day closed with updates from a wide range of different PRISM partners and their work during the 2022 field season. This included feedback from boat stewards at public launches, invasive species monitoring teams, ecological restoration leaders, and eradication efforts. Of local interest was a presentation given by Dr. Twan Leenders, Director of Conservation for the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy. Leenders briefed those in attendance about recent detections of the invasive algae starry stonewort in Chautauqua Lake, ongoing removal of water chestnut, as well as work done along the Chadakoin River to combat the invasive tree of heaven.

In addition to the PRISM Symposium, another important meeting, the 28th New York State Federation of Lake Associations Regional Conference, was held on Saturday in Cuba. NYSFOLA brings together individual lake associations and others to discuss different management approaches to issues like nuisance plant growth, stormwater runoff, nutrient loading, and harmful algal blooms. These events and the organizations that host them are important catalysts for the open dialog and earnest

collaboration that are at the foundation of adaptive management programs, both on Chautauqua Lake and elsewhere.