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PERMISSION GRANTED

Alliance Members Secure Funds For Lake Projects



Figure 1. Aging culverts, like this one pictured along Wright Road in the Town of Chautauqua, will be the focus of a New York State engineering planning grant awarded in 2023.

By Jay Young

Chautauqua Lake & Watershed Management Alliance

Four different Alliance members are moving forward with new projects in 2023, thanks to another successful state grant season. Engineering planning grants have been awarded to the towns of North Harmony and Chautauqua, as well as the village of Lakewood. The reports generated by these types of grants are often a necessary first step before stakeholders can begin construction projects aimed at improving the quality of water entering Chautauqua Lake. The Lucille Ball Memorial Park Playground Improvements Project was also selected for funding, which will continue to build on many recent improvements to the village of Celoron waterfront. Since beginning operations in 2015, the Alliance has partnered with members on 25 state grant awards valued at around \$6 million.

A thing to remember about state grants is that there is a specific menu of options when it comes to each round of funding. Depending on the year, the state may offer many opportunities for one particular type of project or area of the state, and fewer opportunities for others. These grants do not typically give us the means to fund yearly in-lake programs like plant management or invasive species work. Only two of the 25 Alliance-partnered state grant awards have been eligible for work in the lake, which highlights the importance of sustainable local funding to support the majority of our in-lake management needs. One of our main goals is to establish partnerships with our members and help to position them for long-term grant success. You are not just seeking successful applications, you are seeking successful projects. This means aligning the needs of the lake and the community, the eligibility of grantees, the interests of partners, and the local match funding. There are also connecting threads between grant projects, particularly for planning grants. What we often see here are cycles, in which planning grants are needed first before shovel-ready projects can get off the ground.

Our members have a great track record of putting this cycle to work, and using smaller local investments to leverage larger state dollars. Lakewood's latest grant will be used to create a site-specific engineering report on how stormwater causes flooding and water quality issues around Mall Boulevard, and recommend solutions. In 2016 the Village partnered with the town of Busti on a watershed-wide engineering study, which has since been used as a jumping off point for several large stormwater improvement projects. The newly constructed roadside swales you may see along Summit Avenue and elsewhere this spring were recommended by the 2016 study.

We see the cycle at work again with the Town of Chautauqua Stream Culverts Assessment, which will produce an engineering report and recommend improvements for two problem channels. The Town partnered with the Village of Mayville in 2017 on a stormwater engineering study of its own that has since been used as a foundation for future grants, such as the ongoing Chautauqua Swales Stabilization Project. Once a report is created for the Town's culverts, we will have recommendations to solve problems like infrastructure decay, erosion, and flooding. Moving forward, the Town will be well-positioned to apply for outside funding for construction because this groundwork has been laid.

Likewise, North Harmony is slated to produce a report that assesses a priority erosion area along Ball Creek in Stow. The Town and County have leveraged significant state and local funding to aid in the restoration of Ball Creek over the past several years. Recent projects along this major tributary include stabilizations at three locations, which have been funded via a combination of state and local grants. With this 2023 grant, the Town continues to make Ball Creek a priority area for watershed restoration. This is another example of how individual grants and investments can be strategically woven together over time.

Since 2015, Celoron has been able to bring together different sources of public and private funding to revitalize its waterfront. This latest playground improvement comes from the Environmental Protection Fund Grant Program for Parks, Preservation and Heritage, while past projects have been funded by other agencies such as the Department of State. The multipart restoration of Lucille Ball Memorial Park has been made possible by using many different state opportunities, and significant effort at the Village level, to help achieve one overarching goal.

The Alliance would like to thank everyone who worked to make these applications successful, and congratulate all of the grantees around the County working to bring much-needed outside dollars to our community. New doors open to improve the lake and watershed each year when the state releases

its menu of grant opportunities. Turning those opportunities into action requires strong partnerships to align needs, eligibility, interest, and local investments. We look forward to helping our members open new doors in 2023.

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