



Chautauqua Current No. 28

Chautauqua Lake & Watershed Management Alliance, Inc.

July 31, 2023

Alliance Committee Reviews Work, Plans Next Steps



Figure 1. Mobitrac operations have gathered around 640,000 pounds of plant material this year. Submitted photo.

By Jay Young

Chautauqua Lake & Watershed Management Alliance

Lake conditions can change rapidly, and so can the needs of lake users and the schedules of the management programs that serve them. Adapting to these changes, and helping to coordinate between the different groups doing the work, is at the heart of what the Alliance does. More specifically, it is the main goal of our Lake Management Committee. Since 2019 this committee — composed of representatives from lake organizations, Chautauqua County, Chautauqua Institution, towns and villages, and at-large appointees — meets to share updates on conditions and the work being done to keep the lake usable and shorelines clean. Earlier this month stakeholders met again at The Lawson Center in Bemus Point to discuss work progress and plan for the next few months.

Plant management programs are obviously at the top of many committee agendas, and July's meeting included updates from representatives of the Chautauqua Lake Association and the Town of Chautauqua (which operates Mobitrac). CLA Executive Director Doug Conroe shared information on plant conditions, harvesting, shoreline cleanup crews, watercraft stewards, labor, and equipment. CLA

has had a strong return-rate of staff from a year ago, and continues to operate three crews deployed lakewide from Mayville, Long Point, and Lakewood. CLA noted in its July news update that crews have removed around 5.3 million pounds of plants from the lake thus far.

Town of Chautauqua Supervisor Don Emhardt briefed the group on shoreline cleanup performed by Mobitrac barges in partnership with CLA. As of July the Mobis have collected around 640,000 pounds of material, according to CLA. Emhardt relayed that he was still seeing good water clarity in parts of the North basin, and that the Mobis had recently spent significant time collecting plant debris on shores by Hartfield and Dewittville Bays. Mobis collected 18 loads of plants in only two days at Hartfield, and will be continuing their patrol around the lakeshore to address problem areas during the second half of the season. Emhardt also reported positive feedback on fishing conditions in certain areas. The committee also discussed equipment challenges and maintenance needs, which are a constant factor when operating across our 42 miles of shoreline.

The committee also discussed May and June herbicide treatments for invasive curly-leaf pondweed and Eurasian watermilfoil performed by local municipalities in coordination with Chautauqua Lake Partnership. Maps of treatment areas were distributed and can be viewed at chqlake.org/. Turning to the topic of harmful algal blooms, Village of Lakewood Trustee Ellen Barnes and Conroe updated those in attendance on a recent closure of the Hartley Park beach and reopening protocols. Emerging invasive species such as water chestnut and starry stonewort also entered the conversation. The Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy continues to operate its AIS Early Detection network, which aims to survey and combat populations of these plants. The public is encouraged to participate in these volunteer efforts, and can find more information at chautauquawatershed.org/aquatic. CLA watercraft stewards are also keeping an eye out for these species at public launches throughout the county, and working with boaters to stop the spread of invasives.

Dick Gunnell from Chautauqua Institution briefed the committee on The Jefferson Project's work related to lake dynamics and HABs. Newly upgraded vertical profilers that collect a wide range of data returned to the lake in July, and that research team is currently in the process of finalizing the permitting and construction of six tributary monitoring stations. The Institution recently published an article detailing the research program that can be found at chgdaily.com.

The meeting closed with discussion and coordination for the remainder of the prime maintenance season. Variables like labor, funding, and changing conditions typically force program managers to adapt in new ways as we shift from summer to fall. To address these challenges the committee planned another meeting in early September to further evaluate late season needs and resources. The Alliance board will also be considering these developing needs and funding options at its next work session in August.

We have many to thank for the committee and the role that it now plays. Three years ago, under the leadership of interim Executive Director Vince Horrigan, there was a desire by the Alliance to "coordinate member agency in-lake maintenance efforts." To achieve this, Alliance board members representing both the CLA and the CLP initiated the committee as co-chairs. Since its inception the meetings of this volunteer group have provided a regular venue for stakeholders to share, coordinate, and adapt their work for the benefit of the lake and its community.