

## **Chautauqua Lake & Watershed Management Alliance**

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### **ALLIANCE MEMBERS AWARDED \$714,000 FOR FIVE NEW YORK STATE GRANTS**



*Figure 1. Among the five New York State grants secured by Alliance Members are two starry stonewort management projects. Diver-assisted suction harvesting is scheduled to be performed at Ashville Bay, pictured above, as well as Prendergast Point. Photo by the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy.*

The Chautauqua Lake and Watershed Management Alliance is pleased to announce that it has partnered with its Members on five successful 2023 New York State grant applications. Through the efforts of many, around \$885,000 in new project funding will be directed to Chautauqua Lake over the next several years, with about \$714,000 coming from the state. The work made possible by these five new grants is diverse – addressing invasive species, stormwater infrastructure, sediment and nutrient management, and flooding reduction. All will work in coordination to serve the collective goal of maintaining and improving Chautauqua Lake – our county’s economic engine and ecological cornerstone.

Alliance Members earned two grants via the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) Water Quality Improvement Project (WQIP) program. Both fall under the Non-agricultural Nonpoint Source Abatement and Control project category. The Village of Lakewood was awarded \$244,876 for its **Village of Lakewood Fairmount Avenue Constructed Wetland Project**. This work will construct a new wetland pond system to capture and treat stormwater from a 109-acre area. The project will use native seed mixes, live stakes, shrubs, and trees to increase flood resiliency and reduce sediment and nutrient transport to Chautauqua Lake. “Lakewood continues to be a great partner on watershed improvement projects,” said Alliance Executive Director Randall Perry. “They have put together an impressive resume of both engineering studies to identify needs and solutions, and shovel-ready implementation projects

like this. Thank you to everyone at the Village for their hard work and leadership – not just in the watershed, but also as it relates to their efforts on the lake itself and economic development in their community.”

The Town of North Harmony secured \$218,800 for the **Town of North Harmony Carpenter-Pringle Road Stream Culvert Replacement**. This project will replace an aged stream culvert with a new larger arch pipe, and install bank protection at the project site in order to reduce erosion and protect road infrastructure. This culvert replacement will also improve stream function and reduce the negative impacts of storm events, aiding climate resilience. “I am very thankful for our partnership with the Alliance group with this project,” North Harmony Highway Superintendent Benny Karlson said. “Receiving this grant allows North Harmony to address this failing culvert, which will improve the safety of our road and reduce the amount of sediment in our beautiful lake.”

Chautauqua County received a \$50,000 grant via the NYSDEC Non-Agricultural Nonpoint Source Planning and MS4 Mapping Grant (NPG) program for the **Bemus Creek Sediment and Debris Management Plan**. This project will produce a stream sediment and debris management plan for a section of Bemus Creek in the Town of Ellery and Village of Bemus Point which will identify areas in the stream basin that contribute to flood risk and erosion. “We are pleased that the NYSDEC has awarded Chautauqua County funding for this project and optimistic that funding for implementation will be available in future rounds of the CFAs,” County Watershed Coordinator Dave McCoy said. The plan will develop recommendations to reduce the risk of future flooding, erosion, and debris jams to benefit the overall function of the creek and protect homes and infrastructure in the area. The focus area of this study will be the lower sections of the creek, including areas near the Shore Acres community that have suffered from flooding in recent years. “I extend my sincere appreciation to the Chautauqua Lake and Watershed Management Alliance for their dedication in securing the \$50,000 grant via the NYSDEC Non-Agricultural Nonpoint Source Planning and MS4 Mapping Grant (NPG) program,” County Executive Paul M. Wendel Jr. said. “This grant will significantly aid in the development of the Bemus Creek Sediment and Debris Management Plan, focusing on crucial areas within the Town of Ellery and Village of Bemus Point. This initiative is vital in identifying and addressing flood risks, erosion, and debris jams in the lower sections of the creek, with a particular focus on areas such as the Shore Acres community. Through collaborative efforts, we endeavor to protect homes and infrastructure, ensuring the sustainability and functionality of our creek for years to come.”

In January, the NYSDEC announced awards for the recently reopened Invasive Species Grant Program, which provides funding for aquatic and terrestrial invasive species spread prevention, early detection and rapid response, lake management planning, research, and education and outreach. The Town of Chautauqua was awarded \$100,000 for the **Chautauqua Lake Prendergast Point Starry Stonewort Control Project**, while the Town of North Harmony received \$100,000 for the **Chautauqua Lake Ashville Bay Starry Stonewort Control Project**. These projects will employ a removal technique known as diver-assisted suction harvesting, or DASH, to address concentrated infestations of the invasive macroalgae starry stonewort. With only \$3 Million in funds available statewide via the Invasive Species Program, these two projects account for almost 7% of all statewide awards, and were the only grants awarded to the Western New York Region by this program. “It is a testament to all the project partners involved that these applications could be identified and prepared in response to new state funding opportunities,” said Alliance

Project Manager Taylor West. “This problem species spreads readily via fragmentation and has the ability to form dense mats that can impair recreation, harm fish, and crowd out beneficial native species. Management is a high priority for everyone.”

Research continues at the state and federal levels to identify best management practices for starry stonewort, however, few if any surefire techniques exist. With multiple other areas of occurrence around Chautauqua Lake, each with their own unique characteristics, several management options are being tested or considered in parallel. These include two manual removal pilot tests in Ashville Bay in 2022 and 2023, led by the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy, and a chemical control pilot test planned for 2024, under the direction of the Chautauqua Lake Partnership.

Ranging from 10 to 25%, the local match for these grants was assembled from multiple sources including the Alliance-Foundation Match Fund, which includes funds from the Chautauqua Region Community Foundation, the Holmberg Foundation, and The Lenna Foundation; the County; and in-kind services by the Town of North Harmony. These local buy-ins and commitments are vital to leverage these state funds, and we thank those who contributed and helped put these funding packages together. Steps leading to this success include multiple Alliance Members and their partners. Special thanks go out to the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy for its role in helping bring the Fairmount Avenue Project to fruition, as well as its years of work leading the lake’s invasive species early detection and rapid response efforts and related work to address starry stonewort. The Chautauqua Lake Association has also played a key role in our local invasive species programs via its watercraft steward program, as well as participation in the pilot removal of starry stonewort over the past two years. The Chautauqua Lake Partnership, Dr. Rob Richardson of NC State University, and Glenn Sullivan of Ready Scout LLC have provided important technical assistance for starry stonewort pilot testing and permitting, and the assessment of best management practices. Andy Johnson of EcoStrategies PLLC has played an important role in both the Fairmount Avenue Project and North Harmony Culvert Replacement by offering technical assistance and authoring feasibility studies necessary for application preparation.

“These parallel efforts at the local level, and the funding that supports them, continue to be critical in scaling up work and securing these larger outside dollars,” said Perry. “The impact of the Alliance’s consolidated local funding framework, supported generously by the Ralph C. Sheldon Foundation, the Chautauqua Region Community Foundation, The Lenna Foundation, the Holmberg Foundation, the Hultquist Foundation, and the County, is amplified by the pursuit of these state dollars. Meanwhile the ability to direct local dollars quickly to areas of greatest need also spins out leveraging opportunities and strengthens the applications we submit to the state. Neither works as well without the other.”

Since 2015 when it began operations, the Alliance has proudly partnered with Members on 30 NYS grants, with total project values of nearly \$6.9 million. The state grant process – while very competitive – offers a unique opportunity to multiply our local resources when successful. Oftentimes, one local dollar garners three additional dollars from the state, yielding four dollars’ worth of work. With this in mind, the authorship and submission of these proposals continues as a priority objective for the Alliance and its Members, as we work in collaboration to maximize the impact of our funders’ investments and deliver projects that will benefit the Lake now and in the future.

We would like to thank the state, local foundations and the County for their generous contributions, the municipalities, and all other project partners who have helped make these applications a success. State funding for these projects is provided from the Environmental Protection Fund as administered by the NYSDEC. For more information about these projects and others, please contact Alliance Communications Coordinator Jay Young at [jyoung@chautauquaalliance.org](mailto:jyoung@chautauquaalliance.org) or 716-661-8918, or visit the Alliance projects page at <http://www.chautauquaalliance.org/projects/>.