2025 LAKE OSCAWANA DISTRICT NEWSLETTER

Newsletter 2025 Vol. 9

Lake Oscawana Management Advisory Committee (LOMAC)
(Town appointed advisory committee)
Alan Paley (chair), Ellen Friedman, Jeff Coren, Steven David, Judy Dronzek, John Lafata, Jenie Fu, Jacqueline Annabi Supervisor and Town Board Liaison,
Karen Kroboth District Clerk

Visit the LOMAC website for more information about our lake:
http://www.putnamvalley.com/LOMAC

CONTENTS:

HEALTH OF THE LAKE

The health of Lake Oscawana remains stable, and our water is safe for swimming.

Our limnologist has implemented a new grading system to assess the lake's overall condition. The Lake Oscawana Surface Water Quality Index rates the lake on four criteria:

1. Average surface phosphorus
2. Average surface nitrogen content
3. Water clarity (measured by Secchi disk)
4. Cyanobacteria bloom activity

In 2024, Lake Oscawana scored 8 out of 12 on the Water Quality Index, which our limnologist considers satisfactory and indicative of no serious concerns. A perfect score of 12/12 would reflect low surface phosphorus and nitrogen levels, excellent water clarity, and minimal to no Cyanobacteria blooms.

Early 2025 Observations

Preliminary reports indicate lower water clarity, possibly due to limited rainfall, low water levels, and human activities such as boating and watershed runoff.

The New York State DEC and Department of Health (DOH) now use an updated, more sensitive method for detecting microbes. The DOH standard for public beaches is 235 bacterial colonies per 100 mL; any readings above that threshold can prompt beach closures.

In 2025, Hilltop Beach experienced several closures due to Enterococci bacteria. Our limnologist is conducting additional sampling around Hilltop to locate the source, which may be local. Similar closures occurred at Northview Beach, and Cyanobacteria blooms led to short-term closures at Hilltop and Lookout Manor.

While all closures were short-lived, investigations continue. Potential sources of bacteria include both human and animal waste — especially waterfowl. Because source-tracing analysis is expensive, our limnologist is focusing on strategic sampling to help identify likely origins.

Water testing confirmed that surface algae (HAB) levels remained below harmful thresholds, with Cyanobacteria counts never exceeding the World Health Organization's 100,000 cells/mL limit. At a depth of 19 feet (the anoxic layer), the count reached 119,000 cells/mL.

If you notice green patches or algae mats near your beach, please take a photo and send it to lakeOscawanamanagement@gmail.com for review.

If swimming areas are closed, the DOH and Town Hall will post updates on the Town of Putnam Valley website.

LOMAC reminds all homeowners to maintain septic systems (pump every three years) and manage runoff from their properties, including monitoring leach fields, to help protect lake health.

VOLUNTEERING & CSLAP

LOMAC representatives attended the New York State Federation of Lake Associations (NYSFOLA) conferences in Lake George (May 2–3, 2025) and Kent, NY (June 13, 2025) to learn the latest on stormwater management, DEC wetland regulations, HAB monitoring, and lake data collection.

Starting in 2026, Lake Oscawana will join the Citizens Statewide Lake Assessment Program (CSLAP) — a collaborative volunteer monitoring initiative run by the NYSDEC and NYSFOLA. Volunteers will be trained to collect and report lake water quality data, contributing to both state and local datasets.

This program will complement our existing scientific assessments and allow comparisons with other lakes across New York State.

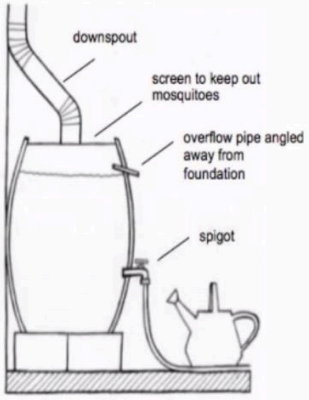
If you'd like to volunteer for the CSLAP program, please email lakeoscawanamanagement@gmail.com.

The town is also recruiting goose addlers to help manage the geese population, reducing waste and nutrient loading in the lake. This is a paid two-person/boat position. Please contact the Lake District Clerk for more details.

CORNELL COOPERATIVE EXTENSION PROGRAMS FOR RAIN GARDEN, RAIN BARREL AND RIPARIAN BUFFER ZONE

LOMAC encourages residents to install rain barrels and rain gardens to reduce stormwater runoff and increase soil infiltration. These systems filter nutrients from runoff and enhance property aesthetics.

Components of a Rain Barrel



Putnam CCE

Rainwater Inlet

Used with Permission from CCE Onondaga

Outlet

Used with permission from CCE Onondaga

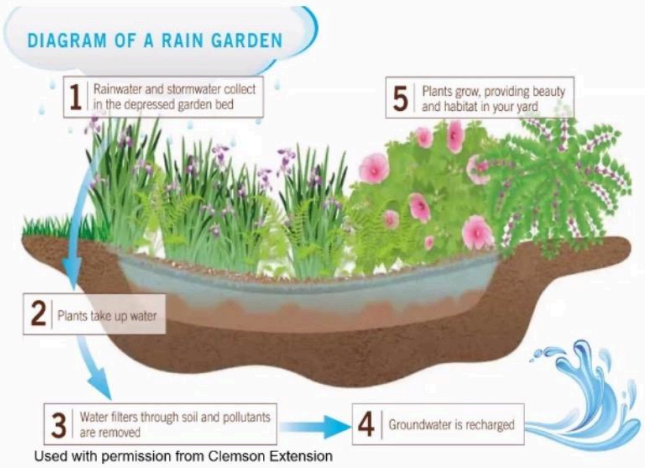
Used with permission from Clemson Extension

Overflow

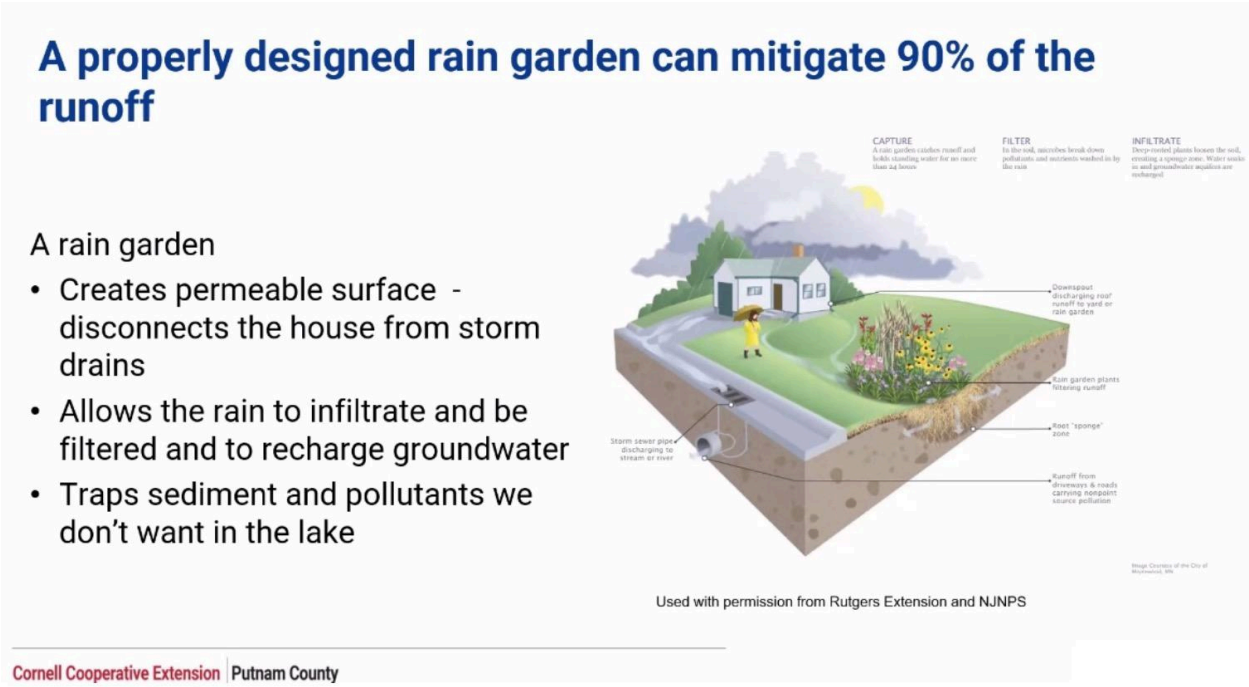
Used with permission from CCE Onondaga

What is a Rain Garden?

- Landscaped depression
- Designed to capture stormwater runoff
- Allow it to infiltrate before entering the waterbody



Used with permission from Clemson Extension



Homeowners can get started with the University of Connecticut's Rain Garden App: https://rgapp.nemo.uconn.edu

Shoreline Buffer Plantings (Riparian Buffers)

Replacing lawn grass at the shoreline with native plants, grasses, or shrubs creates a "buffer zone" that helps filter nutrients from stormwater and septic runoff before they reach the lake. Native plantings also reduce erosion and discourage geese.

• Geese avoid areas where vegetation blocks their line of sight—shrubs or tall grasses (over ~24 inches) make shorelines less attractive for grazing.

Helpful Resources

• Cornell Cooperative Extension presentation:

https://archive.org/details/lomac-lakeshore-buffer-zones-5-20-23

• Native plants for shoreline buffers:

https://www.westchestergov.com/combating-invasive-species/specific-species/275-planting-westchester/by-water

For more updates and access to program recordings, visit:

www.putnamvalley.com/LOMAC

HYDRODYNAMIC SEPARATOR

Maintenance challenges with existing runoff filters prevented phosphate filter replacement in some catchment basins. The Town Highway Department found the basins difficult to clean and maintain.

After reviewing the work being done at Hilltop by FEMA, we requested Town Supervisor to ask FEMA to install a hydrodynamic separator, a device designed to filter stormwater before it enters the lake, rather than the traditional catch basin that was planned. One unit was installed at Hilltop as part of FEMA's post-flood remediation (July 2023).

LOMAC and our limnologist will evaluate its effectiveness and determine whether additional installations are warranted around Lake Oscawana.

ASIAN GRASS CARP & FISH MANAGEMENT

Large carp have been observed in the lake and will continue to be monitored. Since the second grass carp release in 2021, milfoil and several native aquatic plants have been eradicated. Based on modeling, vegetation is expected to begin regrowth in 2026–2027. Current plant life is mainly native tape grass and water lilies.

Additionally, alewife fish were observed this summer. Because alewives feed on oxygen-producing protozoa (potentially increasing anoxia near the lake bottom), approximately 850 walleye were stocked in November 2025 to help balance the ecosystem.

WEEDS, HARVESTER, & HARMFUL ALGAL BLOOMS (HAB)

The harvester team continues to operate in accordance with LOMAC guidelines, prioritizing dock access areas while avoiding shallow zones. In addition to clearing aquatic vegetation, the harvester is collecting filamentous algae mats and cyanobacteria patches. Overall, vegetation density in the lake remains low, with the exception of abundant water lilies. Current efforts are

focused on maintaining dock access and removing nuisance algae as needed. LOMAC has also tasked operators with mapping subsurface rocks to support future operations.

Over the past three years, aquatic vegetation density has declined significantly, with Eurasian milfoil now virtually eliminated. Water lilies and tape grass remain abundant. Operationally, the harvester should avoid shallow areas except when necessary to comply with the approved cutting guidelines. If you observe any harvester activity that appears inconsistent with these guidelines, please report it to the district clerk, Karen Kroboth.

Below are the most recent cutting guidelines approved by LOMAC (2022):

A. The District will, to the extent feasible, operate its mechanical plant harvester in order to remove vegetation in and around community beaches and will, where necessary and feasible, clear a boating channel, 15 feet in width to permit access to open water from community beaches and such other shoreline areas as may be designated from time to time by the Town. However, plants will not be removed from areas of the shoreline that are not developed.

B. The District will not clear the lakefront of any property owner. However, if necessary to provide a homeowner with access to open water, the District will endeavor to cut a channel through the aquatic plants up to 15 feet in width to provide such access

C. The District will also remove growths of aquatic vegetation which interfere with swimming or boating activities on the lake in other areas.

D. The District will maintain a channel up to 50 feet in width in the Outlet Cove, adjacent to Abele Park, to facilitate access to the Cayuga Road and Dunderberg Road outflow streams.

E. Plant species that may be removed shall include invasive species such as Eurasian Water Milfoil and native species including Pondweed and other plants that may preclude recreational access to or use of the lake. The District will endeavor to maintain a sufficient quantity of native species to provide appropriate habitat for fish and other wildlife in the Lake.

BOATING REGULATIONS REMINDER

Starting January 1, 2025, all operators of motorized vessels — regardless of age — must possess a Boating Safety Certificate.

Learn more and register for courses here: https://www.parks.ny.gov/boating/education.aspx

ANNUAL LAKE OSCAWANA DISTRICT MEETING

This year's Annual District Meeting was moved to June to provide timelier updates for lake users.

Stay informed by signing up for email updates or following LOMAC on social media:

- Facebook: LOMAC Facebook Page
- Instagram: @lomac_pv

A recording of the 2025 meeting is available: https://tinyurl.com/mx7n8j28

STAY CONNECTED

The LOMAC Newsletter is now electronic-only.

To receive future newsletters and communications, please complete the subscription form:

LOMAC Newsletter Sign-Up

Thank You from LOMAC

LOMAC sincerely thanks all residents, volunteers, and partners for helping protect and improve Lake Oscawana. Together, we can maintain a healthy, vibrant lake for our community and future generations.