2026 LAKE OSCAWANA DISTRICT NEWSLETTER

Newsletter 2026 Vol. 10

Lake Oscawana Management Advisory Committee (LOMAC)
(Town Appointed Advisory Committee)
Alan Paley (chair), Ellen Friedman, Jeff Coren, Steven David, Judy Dronzek, Christina Imrich, Jenie Fu, Alison Jolicoeur, 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:

INTRODUCTION

2025 turned out to be a challenging year for the health of Lake Oscawana. The 2025 water quality monitoring results emphasize that community stewardship has never been more necessary. Meaningful progress relies on the everyday choices made by all property owners within the lake's watershed as well as those made by visitors wishing to continue to enjoy the lake. This newsletter outlines the current state of the lake and the practical steps every resident can take to protect water quality. LOMAC will continue to lead monitoring and management efforts. Thoughtful practices, such as septic maintenance or upgrade, elimination of fertilizer use, stormwater runoff management, and reducing boat wakes when close to shorelines and in shallow areas, all directly support a healthier lake.

LOMAC extends its sincere thanks to the many residents who already demonstrate sensitivity to the ecological stresses that challenge the health of our lake. Please continue to report observations, maintain your property responsibly, and stay engaged. We invite and urge you to join us on June 13, 2026, for our annual District Meeting, where we will review the monitoring results in detail and hear your questions and perspectives. Information on how to participate is included below.

HEALTH OF THE LAKE

As most of the residents of the district know, LOMAC's limnologist continues to analyze the conditions of the lake. The challenging conditions in 2025 compared to recent years included higher nitrogen and phosphorus levels, reduced water clarity, and periodic shoreline accumulations of cyanobacteria (algae).

At the same time, it's important to note that most areas of the lake remained usable for recreation, including swimming, boating, and fishing. As a general precaution, residents are advised to avoid swimming near visible green surface coating, as recommended by our limnologist.

Understanding the Changes

The variations in water quality appear to be linked to a combination of factors:

- Nutrient increases (nitrogen and phosphorus), which can encourage algae growth
- Reduced native aquatic plant coverage, which normally helps absorb excess nutrients
- Watershed runoff and nitrogen and phosphorus contributions from aging septic systems.

Our limnologist has noted that restoring balance in aquatic plant life may help improve nutrient conditions over time. Accordingly, we are beginning to evaluate the benefits and disadvantages of reducing our Asian carp population.

Water Quality Index

In 2024, we introduced a simplified water quality index to give residents a quick snapshot of the lake's water quality. The Lake Oscawana Surface Water Quality Index relies on four indicators to measure overall lake health:

1. Surface phosphorus levels
2. Surface nitrogen levels
3. Water clarity (Secchi disk measurements)
4. Cyanobacteria bloom activity

In 2024, the first year we used the index, the lake had a score of 8 out of possible 12 points. For 2025, the lake had a score of 4 out of 12, which reflects below-average conditions for this year. This index will help track trends over time and guide future decision-making.

Septic System Awareness

As part of ongoing watershed management:

- The Town is exploring enhanced tracking and enforcement of septic maintenance requirements
- A potential GIS-based system may be developed to improve monitoring and transparency

Residents are encouraged to inspect and maintain their own septic systems to help protect both their property and the lake. For residents who need to replace their septic system, we ask you to consider new alternatives such as Fuji Clean (ModelCRXII) to traditional septic systems.

Looking Ahead

LOMAC and our limnologist will continue to:

- Collect and analyze data throughout the 2026 season
- Investigate sources of nutrients and bacteria
- Evaluate appropriate management strategies

While 2025 presented challenges, ongoing monitoring and community efforts will help inform practical, science-based steps forward.

How Residents Can Help

- Maintain septic systems regularly
- Minimize fertilizer use
- Report unusual algae conditions by sending photos to: LakeOscawanaManagement@gmail.com

For beach closures and updates, please refer to the Town of Putnam Valley website.

EARTH DAY PROGRAM

LOMAC's first Earth Day event was a meaningful step, testing the waters in more ways than one. About 25 community members came together to engage directly with the lake, measuring pH levels, water temperature, and clarity. The hands-on effort offered a simple introduction to understanding the lake's health, while also bringing neighbors together around a shared sense of stewardship. It marked the beginning of a more informed and connected lake community.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

HOW YOU CAN HELP TO IMPROVE THE HEALTH OF OUR LAKES

Create a buffer zone

Plant a buffer zone of native plants along the edge of your property bordering the lake or the road. The buffer zone should be at least 5 to 10 feet wide. A buffer zone absorbs nutrients that would otherwise run into the lake and feed growth of aquatic plants and harmful algae blooms. Shoreline plantings taller than 30 inches will also deter geese from settling in.

Plant a rain garden

Rain gardens collect runoff rainwater and are excellent for lake health. They help filter water before it reaches the lake, reduce erosion of soil, and provide habitat for local wildlife.

Install a rain barrel

Rain barrels collect rainwater that runs off your roof and mitigates erosion and runoff into the lake.

Avoid using fertilizers

It is illegal to use fertilizers containing phosphorus or any compound containing phosphorous (such as phosphate) in Putnam Valley. Fertilizers run off into our water bodies causing harmful algae blooms that can make it unsafe to swim and enjoy our lakes.

Don't blow leaves into streams or lakes

Blowing leaves into lakes is very bad for the ecosystem. Decomposing leaves release nutrients that act like fertilizers and contribute to harmful algae blooms.

Dispose of chemicals responsibly

Never dump anything into storm drains. Pollutants can travel through storm drains to our water bodies, impacting water quality and wildlife health.

LAKE OSCAWANA MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

FIND US ON FACEBOOK

VOLUNTEERING & CSLAP

LOMAC representatives attended the New York State Federation of Lake Associations conferences in Lake George (May 2–3, 2025) and Kent (June 13, 2025) to stay informed on current topics such as stormwater management, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation wetland regulations, Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB) monitoring, and lake data collection. LOMAC representatives will continue this effort by attending the NYSFOLA conferences again in 2026 to remain up to date on evolving lake science and management practices.

Lake Oscawana has also joined the Citizens Statewide Lake Assessment Program, a collaborative volunteer monitoring program led by NYSDEC and NYSFOLA. Through this initiative, trained volunteers will collect and report water quality data, contributing to both state and local datasets.

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

ASIAN GRASS CARP & FISH MANAGEMENT

In 2016, we received a permit from the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation to stock a small number of Asian Grass Carp in order to combat the growth of Eurasian Milfoil, an invasive weed that was choking off our native aquatic plants. After five years with very little change, we received another permit to add some additional carp. Beginning in 2023, the carp began to do their job. The carp have not only substantially eliminated Eurasian Milfoil from the lake but have reduced our native aquatic plants to levels below what our limnologist considers satisfactory for the long term health of the lake. Accordingly, we are beginning to consider obtaining a permit to reduce the carp population to accelerate regrowth of our native plants.

WEEDS, HARVESTER, & HARMFUL ALGAL BLOOMS (HAB)

The harvester on Lake Oscawana is operated in order to clear aquatic vegetation in designated areas and collect filamentous algae mats and cyanobacteria patches. The work focuses on maintaining dock access areas while avoiding shallow zones.

ANNUAL LAKE OSCAWANA DISTRICT MEETING

Our annual District Meeting will be held on June 13, 2026 10am at Putnam Valley Town Hall. Our lake scientist will discuss the 2025 lake report. Please join us.

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

Facebook: LOMAC Facebook Page

Instagram: @lomac_pv

The LOMAC Newsletter is now electronic-only.To receive future newsletters and communications, please complete the subscription form: LOMAC Newsletter Sign-Up