

GREAT LAKES ACTION AGENDA WORK GROUPS



Department of
Environmental
Conservation

2017 PARTNER PROGRESS

Advancing Goals in New York's Great Lakes Watershed

In partnership with sub-basin work group members, state agencies and federal partners, DEC's Great Lakes Watershed Program is pleased to report our shared progress on advancing goals of New York's Great Lakes Action Agenda (GLAA) through the following actions:

Restore Water Quality to Protect Drinking Water and Improve Recreational Uses

Reducing Beach Closures with Green Infrastructure: With DEC's Division of Water, NYS Department of Health, Ecology & Environment and municipal officials (Town of Evans and City of Dunkirk), we developed green infrastructure designs to mitigate stormwater runoff at two Lake Erie beaches. Lessons learned from this pilot will be incorporated into future beach clean-up initiatives.

Supporting Nine-Element Watershed Plans (9E) to Address Nonpoint Sources of Pollution: To improve water quality and minimize the occurrence of algal blooms, we are supporting local efforts to develop 9Es to reduce sediment and nutrient loadings into Lake Erie, Lake Ontario, the Finger Lakes and the St. Lawrence River. <http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/103264.html>

Preventing Harmful Algal Blooms in the Finger Lakes: Great Lakes funding was instrumental in establishing the DEC Finger Lakes Water Hub, coordinating efforts and fostering partnerships to focus on reducing harmful algal blooms and protecting important drinking water supplies. <http://www.dec.ny.gov/press/108146.html>

Conserve Natural Resources to Sustain Fish and Wildlife

Assessing Aquatic Connectivity and Flood Risk: We collaborated with NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets to train and assist 18 Soil and Water Conservation Districts to conduct road stream crossing assessments. The ecosystem-based assessments use the North Atlantic Aquatic Connectivity Collaborative protocols and help us prioritize improvements for road stream crossings. The improvements will enhance aquatic habitat connectivity for fish such as northern pike, salmon, and brook trout and reduce localized flooding and road maintenance.



*Lewis and St. Lawrence County SWCD staff participate in a culvert assessment training
Photo by Emily Sheridan*

Promote Resilient, Sustainable Communities and Ecosystem Integrity

Promoting Nature-based Shoreline Projects: We collaborated with DEC's Water Quality Improvement Project program and the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation to support the implementation of nature-based shoreline demonstration projects. The objective is to promote the use of "soft", ecologically friendly shoreline stabilization techniques in lieu of traditional rock or cement structures to control erosion.



*Dune restoration at Sandy Island State Park
Photo by Emily Sheridan*

Enhancing Community Resilience through Small Grants Program: We are partnering with New York Sea Grant to build community capacity to conserve and restore ecologically resilient watersheds and natural resources. Go to <http://seagrants.sunysb.edu/articles/t/new-york-s-great-lakes-basin-small-grants-program-projects> to read examples of ecosystem-based management in action.

Promoting Resilient Lake Erie Communities: More than 60 people attended the first Great Lakes-region local government training on land use planning tools and programs to enhance community resiliency to extreme weather events. New York Sea Grant, DEC and other partners look forward to expanding this successful program to other areas of the watershed in the next year.

Educating the Next Generation of Great Lakes Stewards

Increasing Great Lakes Literacy and Stewardship through the Great Lakes Ecosystem Education Exchange: With New York Sea Grant and other partners, we are helping bring Great Lakes environmental education curriculum into classrooms through educator training, resources and mentoring. www.seagrants.sunysb.edu/educationexchange

Looking Ahead

We are continually looking for opportunities to collaborate with work group members and partners to identify and implement GLAA work plan priorities and advance ecosystem-based management.

Implementing EBM Pilot Projects

Ecosystem-based Management (EBM) is a coordinated, participatory and science-informed management approach to holistically understand and effectively address the root causes of complex watershed health issues, rather than just the impacts. EBM pilot sub-watersheds will serve as testing grounds for developing innovative science-based solutions that may be replicated in other areas of NYS's Great Lakes basin.

We will be advancing EBM projects in each of the four main sub-basins:

- **Cattaraugus Creek (Lake Erie):** Addressing severe erosion and flash flood impacts by enhancing the resiliency of natural infrastructure.
- **Black & Oatka Creek (SW Lake Ontario):** Supporting community efforts to implement green infrastructure, improve water quality and enhance shoreline resiliency to flooding, erosion and loss of habitat.
- **Wolcott/Sterling Creek (SE Ontario):** Developing a collaborative strategy to achieve water quality, natural resource, resiliency, recreation and sustainability goals.
- **Goose Bay/Chippewa Creek (NE Ontario):** Promoting collaborative actions to sustain ecosystem services that support boating and fishing.
- **Owasco Lake (Finger Lakes):** Conducting water quality investigations and promoting watershed plans to reduce harmful algal blooms.



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www.dec.ny.gov/lands/91881.html