

Explanation of Cayuga Lake Watershed-Wide Water Quality Projects Overview

Purpose of project ('services performed') and project summary: This is a summary of the water quality projects overview undertaken by the contractor to create 'a catalogue of current and recently completed water-quality-related projects undertaken by municipalities and county agencies... by communicating with officials.'

At the inception of the contract, a survey was created to jumpstart conversations with government leaders in order to gather project-specific data to help identify potential grant-eligible water quality projects. Besides creating the contractually-specified watershed-wide 'snapshot' of water quality-related projects, this data collection process has promoted relationships that foster regional planning perspectives, and encourage participation with the Cayuga Lake Watershed Intermunicipal Organization (IO).

Because not all requested survey responses and related data have been received, this overview should be seen as a snapshot catalogue that can be shared and updated as data become available.

The survey: The survey used to collect water quality project data was developed in consultation with Tee Ann Hunter, the IO-chair, and three recommended IO members. It was then reviewed and 'tested' with local officials before going 'live.' The question set was intended to ease government leaders into a general conversation about water quality issues before asking them for project-specific details. The survey outlined general parameters by identifying water quality 'categories,' before requesting specific information about their projects. One question asked for a staff referral (see the survey for town officials and survey for county officials, below).

Method of data collection: Surveys were emailed to all municipal, county department, and Soil & Water District heads based on an initial contact list provided by and in subsequent consultation with the IO Chair. Emails were followed by direct phone contact. Many of the surveys were conducted by telephone. Often, conversations led to staff referrals which required another round of contacts. A series of follow-up conversations and emails with staff and officials led to the submission of project information via Google Form, Excel, and/or email. Otherwise, verbal interviews were transcribed into Excel spreadsheets. All project-specific data was compiled into three Excel spreadsheet 'catalogues' with uniform formats (see *Cayuga Lake Watershed-Wide Water Quality Projects Overview* tabs: 1. Towns, Villages, City; 2. County Planning, Health, Water; 3. Soil & Water Districts).

Participation: Relationship-building was critical to achieving survey participation. This intangible benefit could be useful in the continuation of this cataloguing process and to growing IO membership and related collaborative efforts. For each of the 57 entities that were approached by email and/or phone, at least two persons were contacted on average, with multiple attempts needed to garner actual contact and response. Thorough notes were made regarding contacts established in order to understand the chain-of-command and decision-making structure around water quality work within each entity in order to retrieve the needed data.

In addition to the towns, villages, and City (Ithaca) in the watershed who were contacted (Figure 1-2), Cayuga, Cortland, Schuyler, Seneca, and Tompkins County Soil & Water Districts; Cayuga, Seneca, and Tompkins County Planning Department staff; watershed-relevant Cayuga, Schuyler, and Seneca County Public Health and Water and Sewer Authority officials; the Seneca County Board of Supervisors Agriculture and Environmental Affairs Committee Chair; and the Finger Lakes Institute Director were interviewed and/or submitted their past and current water-quality projects data. There was a 95% response rate for all the county departments and municipalities approached and a 80% rate for submission of project data. A few participants who did not submit data felt they did not have water projects to report at the time - possibly based on their lack of understanding of

what was meant by 'water quality projects' for the purposes of this initiative. Perhaps they would participate after seeing the submissions of their peers.

Explanation of project status & gaps in data: Despite the high participation rate, this report should by no means be seen as complete. It is being delivered as preliminary for the purposes of creating an initial 'snapshot' overview for the IO as described by the Chair. This data set should be seen as evolving, informal, and incomplete until, 1), project information in the draft catalogue overview is carefully reviewed and 'approved' by all participants, which was not possible given the time constraints of the contract, and, 2) water quality projects are more narrowly defined in advance of final submissions.

Any existing data gaps represent information not received from or given by the survey participants after repeated efforts to solicit it within the time constraints of the project. No assumptions can be made about any missing data fields other than the fact that no data was submitted nor received for that field. The high participation rate made it somewhat more difficult to receive all requested pieces of data within the approximated timeframe for this contract and given that survey participation was strictly voluntary.

The approximate timeline for the independent contractor to complete this project was estimated as three months. Including the two weeks of survey development / approval and two weeks of Christmas time vacation, 175+ hours have been dedicated over approximately 15 weeks averaging over 10 hours of work per week in order to accumulate the 275 project entries presented in the 3 spreadsheets. In addition, a PowerPoint and presentation about the project were offered in person by the contractor on February 27th, 2019. There were several subsequent conversations and meetings with the project supervisor (IO Chair), and revisions were made following three rounds of emails and phone outreach to the government survey participants, seeking review and final approvals of their submissions to the catalogue.

Value of initial stage of data collection / overall observations: Informal conversations with local leaders and staff yielded insight into how water quality issues are perceived and prioritized. The catalogue entries aim to reflect how each government leader and their staff view their own water quality work. The overview highlights many approaches to managing water issues, and underscores the nexuses between staff capacity, resources, and outcomes throughout the watershed. Project submissions were often gained through conversations that struggled to identify the lines between distinct 'projects' and the day-to-day roles and responsibilities of governments, such as managing compliance and regular operations associated with water-related public works, and including emergency flood and hazard planning and management.

Additional potential future deliverables include a draft government 'wish list' (based on responses to the survey question, 'Are there water-related projects you would undertake if you had funding or other assistance?') as well as an updated watershed-wide contact list and descriptions of each listed entity, among others.

Dear [town official],

I am contacting you on behalf of The Cayuga Lake Watershed Intermunicipal Organization (IO) to gather information about current and recently completed water quality projects*. This information will give the IO a snapshot of what's going on across the watershed to help them target outreach with municipalities, as a part of their contract for the New York State Department of State Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) grant. The goal is to get your input to help prioritize the IO's next steps concerning health of the lake, and to assist local governments in the watershed with the planning and funding of identified projects.

The below questionnaire can be completed online, in-person, or by telephone. I will reach out to you shortly by telephone to find out your preferences for completing the survey within the next two weeks, if possible, as follows:

****(Some key categories concerning water quality: roads, ditches, and other infrastructure; drinking water; wastewater; health issues; streams and wetland issues; development and land use issues; agricultural activities; boating, fishing and swimming/ recreational water uses; safety, fees, and public access issues). Also consider projects in the above categories in terms of sediment, erosion, nutrients (e.g. phosphorus and nitrogen) and contaminants.***

- 1) Are there problem areas concerning water and its uses in your town?
- 2). Do you have a list of priorities for work that needs to be accomplished concerning water quality? Are water quality projects part of ongoing discussion and capital project planning in your community?
- 3). Are there others within your staff or community who I should contact for further information on water quality projects recently completed or being planned?
- 4). Are there water-related projects you would undertake if you had funding or other assistance?
- 5). Please use [this link](#) to note your current, planned and recently completed water quality projects, including description, cost, funding source(s), partners, timelines, and objectives. (Fill in one (1) form per project.)

Thank you so much for taking the time to complete this survey. For an in-person or phone meeting to replace this online survey, please contact me, at 607-269-5104 or jenkarius@gmail.com, and/or let me know the best staff person to reach out to.

In early 2019, you will receive an overview report of all the water quality projects happening throughout the Cayuga Lake watershed. You will be invited to an IO presentation of the report around that time.

For more information about the Intermunicipal Organization and participating in meetings, contact Chair Tee-Ann Hunter, Town of Ithaca, at tdh12344@hotmail.com.

With appreciation,

Jennifer Karius
Independent Contractor for
Cayuga Lake Watershed Intermunicipal Organization
607-269-5104/ jenkarius@gmail.com

Dear [county official],

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- 1). What are the recently completed (in the last 3-5 years) and currently planned water quality projects in your county? (Please enter projects using the Google form link in #7.)
- 2). To what degree have flooding and storm water run-off been an issue in your county? What are the challenges and how have you addressed them?
- 3). What are your water-related projects being planned for the future? * (Please use Google form link in #7.)
- 4). Do you have a list of priorities for the work that needs to be accomplished? Are water quality projects part of ongoing discussion and capital project planning in your community?
- 5). Are there others within your staff or community who I should contact for further information on water quality projects?
- 6). Are there water quality projects you would undertake if you had funding or other assistance?
- 7). Please use [this link](#) to note your current, planned and recently completed water quality projects, including description, cost, partners, funding sources, timelines, and objectives. (Fill in one (1) form per project

Thank you so much for taking the time to complete this survey. For an in-person or phone meeting to replace this online survey, please contact me, at 607-269-5104 or jenkarius@gmail.com, and/or let me know the best staff person to reach out to.

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For more information about the Intermunicipal Organization and participating in meetings, contact Chair Tee-Ann Hunter, Town of Ithaca, at tdh12344@hotmail.com.



Figure 1-2
Municipalities in the Cayuga Lake Watershed

- Tompkins County**
 - Village of Aurora
 - Town of Carline
 - Town of Danby
 - Town of Newfield
 - Town of Dryden
 - Town of Ithaca
 - Town of Enfield
 - Town of Lansing
 - Town of Ulysses
 - Town of Groton
 - City of Ithaca
 - Village of Dryden
 - Village of Trumansburg
 - Village of Lansing
 - Village of Cayuga Heights
 - Village of Freeville
- Schuyler County**
 - Town of Hector
 - Town of Catharine*
- Tioga County**
 - Town of Spencer
- Cortland County**
 - Town of Harford
 - Town of Virgil
 - Town of Cortlandville
 - Town of Scott*
 - Town of Homer
- Cayuga County**
 - Town of Summerhill
 - Town of Genoa
 - Town of Sempronius
 - Town of Locke*
 - Town of Venice
 - Town of Ledyard
 - Town of Scipio
 - Town of Fleming
 - Town of Aurelius
 - Town of Springport
- Seneca County**
 - Town of Covert
 - Town of Lodi
 - Town of Ovid
 - Town of Romulus
 - Town of Fayette
 - Town of Varick
 - Town of Seneca Falls
 - Village of Interlaken

***Municipalities with small portion in watershed**