

# FOLLOWPA FUNDAMENTALS

FINGER LAKES - LAKE ONTARIO WATERSHED PROTECTION ALLIANCE

FROM STREAMS, TO LAKES, TO GREAT LAKES

PROTECTING OUR WATER RESOURCES BEGINNING AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

## In This Issue:

This edition of the newsletter highlights successful Water Quality Monitoring Programs and Education and Outreach Efforts implemented throughout the Finger Lakes – Lake Ontario Drainage Basin.

WINTER 2026



## MISSION

The mission of the Finger Lakes Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance is to facilitate processes that encourage watershed partnerships and implementation of action plans to protect and enhance water quality based on:

- Local needs assessment
- Holistic approach
- Information exchange and public education
- Measurable goals and milestones

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FOLLOWPA is a unique, time-tested, organization that plays a critical role in the protection of New York's freshwater resources within the Finger Lakes — Lake Ontario drainage basin. FOLLOWPA provides protection through funding for locally supported water quality initiatives that assist farmers, businesses, the tourism industry and local governments within the twenty-five-county region. Programs are developed and implemented to address specific water quality needs that are consistent with State priorities and watershed plans.

FOLLOWPA members and partners have made great strides in the protection of New York State's water resources by integrating innovative approaches to reduce nonpoint source pollution at the grassroots level. This issue of FOLLOWPA Fundamentals will focus on water quality projects completed by several FOLLOWPA members, with additional support provided by local landowners, agricultural producers and municipalities in the Finger Lakes - Lake Ontario drainage basin. These projects were visited during the FOLLOWPA Watershed Tours held in the fall of 2025.

Watershed Tours are organized by FOLLOWPA's Program Coordinator Kristy LaManche annually and provide an opportunity to show staff from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and FOLLOWPA's New York State Senate and Assembly representatives how efficiently and effectively FOLLOWPA funds are utilized throughout the watershed. The tours also provide an opportunity for State agency and elected officials to interact with landowners, agricultural producers and key stakeholders who can attest to the importance of FOLLOWPA funding to implement water quality projects.

# STEUBEN AND YATES COUNTY TOUR

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A variety of FLOWPA members and stakeholders participated in touring seven FLOWPA supported projects throughout Steuben and Yates Counties on September 17, 2025. Attendees included; **Kristy LaManche**, FLOWPA Program Coordinator; **Jeff Parker**, Steuben County Soil and Water Conservation District; **Jim McGlynn** and **Ernie Swift**, Steuben County Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Directors; **Mike Hanna**, Steuben County Legislature and Steuben County Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Directors; **Doug Robinson** and **Shawn Parker**, Town of Urbana Highway Department; **Colby Petersen** and **Tom Eskildsen**, Yates County Soil and Water Conservation District; **Jim Higgins**, Finger Lakes Museum; **Aimee Clinkhammer** and **Lexi Davis**, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation Great Lakes Program; **Abigail Johnson**, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation Region 8; and **Gabriel Yerdon**, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation Finger Lakes Watershed Hub.



## STEUBEN COUNTY WATER QUALITY

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Steuben County lies within the Chemung, Genesee, and Seneca River watersheds. Areas on the northwestern and southwestern fringes of the county drain through the Genesee River to Lake Ontario. The northeastern portion of the county drains through Keuka and Seneca Lakes to the Seneca River and ultimately into Lake Ontario as well. The New York State Priority Waterbodies List, the Steuben County Water Quality Strategy, and the Seneca-Keuka Lake Watershed Nine Element Plan indicate that high sediment loading caused by erosion is the leading cause of surface water impairments affecting fish populations, recreation (bathing/swimming) and aesthetics in the County. Streambank, road ditch and embankment erosion accounts for much of the problem and is a consequence of the County's steep topography, natural geology and alterations to stream corridors. During the 2025 FLOWPA Tour, participants visited the four sites to see how the Steuben County SWCD (SCSWCD) and local partners have worked together to improve and protect water quality within the Finger Lakes watershed.

## STABILIZATION PROJECT GALLAGHER ROAD

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The SCSWCD partnered with the Town of Pulteney to stabilize 965 linear feet of road ditch along Gallagher Road to prevent excessive erosion and sediment deposition to Keuka Lake. Approximately 469 tons of DOT medium and light stone fill was installed within the ditch to repair the 3 foot deep and 4 foot wide eroded area and reshape the ditch to slow the stormwater down in this steeply sloped area. SCSWCD and Town-owned equipment were utilized for this project (valued at \$17,990.41). FLOWPA funds (\$12,511.06) were used to purchase the material for this project. The SCSWCD and Town also provided the labor (in-kind) to complete the work at this site.



## STABILIZATION PROJECT AT STATE ROUTE 54



Stormwater runoff from State Route 54 has caused severe gully erosion along East Lake Road which resulted in over 250 cubic yards of material entering Keuka Lake, a AA drinking water resource for residents of Steuben County.

The Town of Urbana, the Steuben County Soil and Water Conservation District (SCSWCD) and the Steuben County Department of Public Works worked together to develop and implement an extensive stabilization project to protect Keuka Lake water quality, private residences and public infrastructure from further degradation due to the more frequent and higher intensity rain events occurring in this steeply sloped area. Approximately 328 tons of DOT medium riprap were installed at a total project cost of \$25,804.87. The SCSWCD used \$12,729.57 in FLOWPA funds to purchase the material needed to implement the project. The Town of Urbana and the SCSWCD contributed an additional \$13,075.30 in labor and equipment to complete the work.

## STABILIZATION PROJECT AT BOYD HILL ROAD

The SCSWCD and Steuben County Department of Public Works partnered on a high priority project on Boyd Hill Road to address high volumes of stormwater runoff that have caused severe erosion and sediment deposition. Approximately 2,000 linear feet (1/2 acre) of road ditch had eroded to an average depth of 3 feet for more than 3,000 linear feet causing sediments to clog the existing drainage system rendering it ineffective. By rock lining the road ditch with 1,156 tons of medium rock riprap approximately seven tons of soil was saved from entering the Keuka Lake, a class AA drinking water source. The SCSWCD used FLOWPA funding from two contract years to purchase the materials which cost \$50,687. The County DPW contributed their labor as in-kind match and the SCSWCD donated their equipment for the installation of the project.



## STABILIZATION PROJECT IN PULTENEY



A culvert in the Town of Pulteney discharges into an agricultural field drainage ditch causing it to erode and send large amounts of sediment directly into Keuka Lake, especially during high rainfall storm events.

The SCSWCD worked with the landowner to stabilize 1,200 foot of drainage ditch by installing a combination of rock lined ditch segments using DOT medium and light stone fill and vegetated ditch segments to slow the stormwater down and filter out sediments and pollutants before the runoff enters the lake. The SCSWCD and Town of Pulteney contributed \$4,000 worth of equipment usage and labor to install the materials with FLOWPA funds used to purchase the material (\$5,234.80).

## YATES COUNTY WATER QUALITY

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Yates County is located within the Seneca, Keuka and Canandaigua Lake watersheds. These surface and groundwater resources provide drinking water to thousands of residents and visitors. The New York State Priority Waterbodies List documents water quality threats to these drinking water supplies from sediments, attached pollutants, and pathogens in almost all watersheds in the county. The most common sources of these pollutants are from road bank erosion, construction activities, stream bank erosion and agriculture runoff. Watershed wide management plans developed individually for these three Finger Lakes identify threats from roadbank erosion, streambank erosion, construction activities and agriculture as high priority concerns. The Yates County Soil and Water Conservation District has utilized the Seneca-Keuka 9 Element Plan's action matrix to prioritize implementation projects and direct FLOWPA funds throughout the watershed.

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### STREAMBANK STABILIZATION AT THE FINGER LAKES MUSEUM



Working in partnership with the Finger Lakes Museum and the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the Yates County Soil and Water Conservation District (YCSWCD) stabilized a 175 linear foot section of Sugar Creek, a Class (C) stream in the Keuka Lake watershed, using locally sourced trees to construct the in-stream bank stabilization structures.

The total project cost was \$60,000 and the YCSWCD FLOWPA program contributed \$22,800.

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### WATER AND SEDIMENT CONTROL BASIN AT LAWSON ROAD

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Working with the landowner, the YCSWCD designed and installed (2) water and sediment control basins (WASCOBs) to address ongoing erosion issues on the active farmland despite the landowner's use of good soil health practices including strip cropping and no-till planting techniques. The WASCOBs and associated underground outlet pipe systems (over 800 linear feet) were designed to store a minimum of the 10-year storm and slowly release the stormwater through the pipe to a downslope gravel pit to control erosion from the cropland and reduce runoff volume and velocity to Seneca Lake. These types of projects are critical in today's changing climate where we are all experiencing more frequent and higher intensity storms. The total project cost was \$24,000 of which \$20,000 was contributed by the FLOWPA Program.



The 25 County FLOWPA membership would like to express our sincere gratitude to all participants who have contributed to our efforts to preserve and protect New York's freshwater resources within the Finger Lakes and Lake Ontario Basin. We extend special appreciation to the landowners, producers, and municipalities whose projects were featured in the 2025 Watershed Tours. Your commitment and proactive engagement are instrumental in advancing the goal of improved water quality in our region.



## STREAMBANK STABILIZATION AT CHUBB HOLLOW ROAD



The road ditch on Welker Road in the Big Stream Subwatershed of Seneca Lake had been subject of erosion for many years despite efforts to stabilize the flow. Over 150 linear feet of rock paving was determined to be the best solution to protect the bed and banks; while allowing the velocity to remain high at the county box culvert.

Working with the Town of Barrington Highway Department, the project was completed in stages to accommodate the highway department's budget and time.

The YCSWCD utilized FLOWPA funds from (3) contract years to fund the purchase of the materials, which totaled \$57,547.00.

### LOOKING AHEAD

Planning for the 2026 Watershed Tour is already underway. This upcoming tour will showcase a diverse array of FLOWPA-supported projects occurring across multiple regions within the FLOWPA area, providing participants with the opportunity to learn more about ongoing conservation efforts, successful partnerships, and the positive impacts these projects are having on local waterways and communities.

In addition to the watershed tour, FLOWPA Program Coordinator Kristy LaManche is collaborating with FLOWPA partners in Cortland, Lewis, Madison, Oneida, Onondaga, and Oswego Counties to plan a series of public events throughout the Oneida Lake Watershed. These events will highlight a new, large-scale initiative aimed at combating water chestnut (*Trapa natans*), an aggressive invasive aquatic plant found throughout New York State. Water chestnut spreads rapidly due to the absence of natural predators and out-competes native vegetation, leading to significant negative impacts on native habitats, fishing access, recreational opportunities, and overall economic vitality within the Oneida Lake and Three Rivers watershed.

Addressing this issue through a coordinated, watershed-wide approach—both in terms of geographic coverage and collective effort—is critically important to reducing further spread and minimizing long-term ecological and economic damage. To support this work, the Oswego County Soil and Water Conservation District, on behalf of FLOWPA and its five partner organizations, was awarded \$921,720 from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. Additional details about upcoming events and opportunities to get involved will be shared soon, so be sure to stay tuned for ways to participate and support this important program.



FOLLOWPA membership includes the following New York State counties wholly or partially in the Lake Ontario Drainage basin:



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