

Network News



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Earth Day Lasts All Year for Fall Creek Volunteers

By George Patte, Chair, Fall Creek Watershed Committee

The Fall Creek Watershed Committee (FCWC) is a group of private citizens concerned about the ecology and health of Fall Creek, which drains a watershed extending from Lake Como in Summerhill to Cayuga Lake in Ithaca. The watershed is impacted by human activity ranging from long-standing agriculture to more recent residential development and transportation corridors. Believe it or not, Ithaca Gun was not the only industry located in the Fall Creek watershed! When we formed, each member brought specific concerns to the table, but we soon found that we really did not know how to assess the health of the system, overall. Baseline information was needed to truly understand the state of the Creek, and changes that might be occurring. Now, we are monitoring it by taking water chemistry samples and by making inquiries about some of its residents, commonly called "bugs", or aquatic insects.



In 2002, over 80 volunteers, including many Trout Unlimited members, removed some 3300 pounds of debris from Fall Creek."

Our efforts have been going on for more than two years. I was invited, as the recently named chairperson of FCWC, to provide some background on the experiences of our group, and relate how the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network has assisted us. Sharon Anderson has been instrumental in helping us to engage people, seek funding, and organize events such as the Fall Creek Clean-up each May. The Network has keyed us into ongoing efforts such as Water Week and Lakefest, and agencies such as the Cortland and Tompkins County Conservation Districts. The Network's web resources have also been of great assistance as a means of quick communication among our members.

As a result of this assistance, we have forged alliances with people who have the expertise we need. We can offer organized and competent volunteer assistance in return. One example is our alliance with The Community Science Institute (CSI),

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WATERSHED STEWARD'S MESSAGE

We Each Make A Difference



By Sharon Anderson, Watershed Steward

The return of longer days and warmer temperature are especially welcome after this year's harsh winter. I take pleasure in weeding the garden, noticing the lawn turn lush green and having a car at last free from road salt. The choices we make in all of these areas can be good – or bad—for water quality. That's why this Network News highlights simple, specific steps you can take to protect our water. We have included both actions you can do around your home and actions you can take with others to maximize the effect.

Knowing how to most effectively take action takes knowledge. Along with the articles on car washing, lawn care and other prac-

tices in this issue, we have enlarged the library of information and valuable links available on our website. I urge you to take advantage of these resources, and the many educational events scheduled for this spring. The Network connects you to all these opportunities so you can pick the ways to protect our water quality that suit you.

Finally, we pay tribute to Dave Morehouse this spring with a new award in hope that his legacy will serve as inspiration for how one person can make a difference. Your actions, in concert with those of all the other Network members, will make a difference. What will you choose to do this spring? 🐾

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world; indeed it's the only thing that ever does."

—Margaret Mead

FROM THE NETWORK STAFF

Our Volunteers Make the Difference!

By Bill Foster, Watershed Educator

While those of us who work for the Network strive to make a lasting impact in the Watershed, it is the volunteers we support who truly make the organization visible throughout the watershed. Without their continuing good work, we would merely be drops in the proverbial bucket. We hope that with an understanding of the scope of their efforts, you will agree that your investment in us is well served.

Workshops and informational events have been a strength of the network since its inception, and we continue to concentrate on these as prime opportunities to reach and teach the public. Network staff have recently conducted workshops around the watershed dealing with private well safety, stormwater management, and farmstead emergency planning. Our volunteers, however, have addressed audiences on lake levels, landfills, sediment pollution, stewardship and more as they have participated in a broad range of seminars, tours and discus-

sions. Volunteers like Roxy Johnston and Gene Hocutt have met with classes from Wells College to South Seneca, demonstrating watershed concepts and helping students develop concepts for our annual essay contest.

In all, our ability to provide volunteers with materials and information as they present information to the public has allowed the Network to address nearly fifteen hundred residents over the first three months of 2003.

There is much more in the works for the coming months. Check the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network website for more on the efforts mentioned above and for upcoming opportunities. Our website has greatly expanded over the past months, due in no small part to the efforts of our new volunteer web-master, Judy Pipher. A big THANK YOU to Judy and all of the other volunteers that make so much of what we do happen. The Network would not exist without people like YOU. 🐾



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Wash Me!

By Jose Lozano, City of Ithaca Environmental Lab

The spring ritual of getting the salt and grime off cars is now in full swing. In fact, it has been estimated that 25% of us wash our cars at least once a month. That translates to some 30,000 carwashes each month, right here in the Cayuga Lake Watershed! There is nothing wrong with washing your car, but please consider using a controlled commercial car wash. Or, if you wash it yourself, take a few simple steps to avoid polluting.

Washing your car not only removes salt, but a host of other substances, including grease, oil, sand, brake dust, and heavy metals. No less worthy of consideration are the detergents and other cleaners used to facilitate the task. Any of these compounds that find their way untreated into storm sewers or streams will ultimately wind up in the lake. When you use a commercial car wash, however, wash-water is pre-treated and piped to your local wastewater treatment plant for additional purification. This is especially important if you plan to clean your engine, or the bottom of the car, where high-strength detergents may be required and particularly troublesome materials can build up.

If you do wash your car at home, do it on the lawn, a gravel driveway, or on some other permeable surface, and keep a distance from your well. A few preventive measures will reduce the impact to our creeks and lake:

- Direct wash-water away from nearby storm drains, and toward a place where it can slowly evaporate or soak into the ground.

Don't forget- if you block a storm drain, uncover it when you are finished!

- Collect especially soapy water and dispose of it separately into a drain connected to the sanitary sewer system. (I.e. sinks, bathtubs and toilets)
- Use biodegradable, phosphate-free and nonylphenol-free soaps.
- Use hoses with nozzles that automatically shut off when unattended.
- Save your engine and undercarriage cleaning for the commercial car wash.

With these simple guidelines, your organization's fund-raising car wash doesn't have to be shunned, either. Contact the Network to get more information on planning a responsible car wash event. Remember- wherever you live, you



A wisely chosen location makes car washing a more lake friendly activity! Image courtesy of Alabama Clean Waters Partnership.

are a part of the watershed. The water that washes your car just might end up in your kitchen tap in the not-so-distant future. 🐾

Watershed Activist Opportunity:

Share this information with automotive dealers, rental agencies and fleet managers to help them practice watershed stewardship!

Network Welcomes a New Face, and Bids a Fond Farewell

The Network welcomes aboard this month, our newly hired office manager, Diane Emmons. Diane. A native of Trumansburg



and long time resident of Interlaken, Diane has a deep understanding of this area as well as impressive work experience with Holton's Pharmacy in Trumansburg and the South Central Regional Library Council in Ithaca. After completing her education, Emmons moved to Rochester to explore what a metropolitan area had to offer. Having an even deeper appreciation for what the Finger Lakes had to offer, Diane and her husband chose to settle in Interlaken. A short walk brings her to the office, where she serves as a communication and information hub to keep us functioning smoothly.

Diane replaces Connie Kindig, who has accepted a new position as Executive Director of the Seneca Museum of Waterways and Industry in Seneca Falls. In her brief six months with us, she made a tremendous impact around the office with professionalism, humor and kind words. We look forward to keeping in contact with Connie, as she settles into her new house, just outside of Interlaken, and into her new position. See what the museum has to offer, as www.senecamuseum.com. Good Luck, Connie! 🐾 📄

ANNOUNCEMENTS . . .

Lake Management Conference Held in Hamilton

May 2-5

🦟 Aquatic weed identification and control, boat safety and impacts, limnology 101, lake law and watershed management options are just a few of the workshops offered at the 20th annual conference presented by the New York State Federation of Lake Associations (NYSFOLA). Members of organizations like the Network may attend one to three days of presentations at the White Eagle Conference Center on Lake Moraine.

Details of the May 2-5 conference are available at www.nysfola.org (click on Annual Conference) or by calling 800-796-3652.

The New York State Federation of Lake Associations (NYSFOLA) is a coalition of lake associations, environmental groups, agencies and private corporations and individuals concerned with the preservation of lakes, ponds and their interconnecting waterways. NYSFOLA serves as the New York Chapter of the North American Lake Management Society. Any member of the Network can join this statewide organization for a reduced fee of \$10.00.

“Frog Songs” Hike Planned

Saturday, May 10, 7:30 p.m.

🦟 The Finger Lakes Land Trust is sponsoring an educational and fun evening hike, titled, “FROG SONGS” at the Lindsay-Parsons Biodiversity Preserve in W. Danby. Herpetologist Jackie Grant will lead the program. *Bring flashlight or headlamp!* From Ithaca, go south on Rt. 13. Take left exit on Rt. 34/96 and go about 7 miles to the preserve parking lot, opposite house #2500 and just beyond the W. Danby Fire Station. Contact Charlotte Nunes, at (607) 275-9487, for more information

The Cortland County Water Festival

Saturday, May 31, 10 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

🦟 This outdoor event will be held at the Water Works on Broadway Street in Cortland. The event will feature many activities, including tours of the Cortland Aquifer and pump house, family games, groundwater and water quality demonstrations, and informative water-related displays. Kids can also enter coloring contests, visit the Dunking Booth, play miniature golf, dig for prizes in the sandbox and meet Cortland County Soil & Water mascot Ronny Raindrop®. This free event is sponsored by the Cortland County Water Quality Coordinating Committee. Call Seth Dennis, at (607) 753-0851 for more information.

National Drinking Water Week Celebrations

May 3-10

🦟 **Drinking Water Week** is a national event in which communities across the nation join to promote public awareness and involvement in drinking water issues. The celebration gets underway in the southern portion of the watershed with the annual **Fall Creek Clean up, on Saturday, May 3, 9:00 – 11:00 am.**



Volunteers collect samples for water quality & habitat assessment.

Last year, 83 volunteers from Tompkins, Cayuga and Cortland Counties removed some 3300 pounds of trash from this beautiful creek and its corridor. Contact

🦟 George Patte, Chair of the Fall Creek Watershed Committee, at (607) 272-8784 to sign up yourself or a group. The Fall Creek Chapter of Trout Unlimited co-sponsors this event, along with the Network.

Festivities continue on Friday, May 9th at Center Ithaca on the Commons and Saturday, May 10th at the Farmers' Market. Between 9:00 am and 2:00 pm each day, the Tompkins County Health Department will sponsor taste tests of local municipal water supplies. Local agencies and watershed groups, including the Network, will showcase programs, information, and opportunities to get involved. Volunteers may also participate in streambank protection activities and demonstrations, sponsored by the Black Locust Initiative and the Network, which will take place throughout the day on May 10, at the Farmers' Market. All are welcome! For more information contact Niamh O' Leary, at (315) 364-3279, or noleary@wells.edu.

🦟 In Cortland County, additional Drinking Water Week activities are being planned, including school programs on safe drinking water and water conservation, articles and the distribution of Water Week place mats to local restaurants. Look for similar events to be announced in your local paper for other areas of the watershed, or check the Network website. 🦟

Watershed Watch Program Now Available

By monitoring local water bodies, anyone may obtain a better understanding of water resources and the impact their every day activities have on our local watersheds.

Watershed Watch, first introduced as a fun and effective learning tool for area students, is now open to all interested Cayuga County residents or groups who would like to investigate local streams, lakes, or ponds.

A Watershed Watch Monitoring Kit includes a LaMotte chemical test kit, D-nets, field guides, and hand-held magnifying glasses for sampling macroinvertebrates or “water bugs”, and equipment for measuring the physical characteristics of waterbodies. Helpful resources relating to water quality, including the “Watershed Science for Educators’ Guidebooks are also available. The fee to participate is \$30 per group, and it includes hands-on instruction, website-based guidance and data management tools. Call Mike at (315) 255-1183 for more information.

Willows Available for Stream-Side Planting

As in past years, the Network has received willow whips, suitable for planting along stream banks to improve stability and habitat. “Streamco” willow is a bush-type variety that will grow to a height of only eight to twelve feet, and produces excellent osiers for basket making. Stocks are free, but limited. Individuals and groups interested in initiating a planting project, along any stream with fishing access, should contact the Network office for assistance as soon as possible.

Fall Creek Clean Up *continued from page 1*

founded by Steve Penningroth. CSI has tested our water samples and helped us to interpret the results. It is important to us to see that our water samples take on meaning, and that happens when we compare our dissolved oxygen or phosphorous levels with acceptable standards.

This is exciting work for a group of volunteers. We look forward to becoming better educated on the issues as they become apparent. We meet the first Thursday of each month at the County office building at 125 E. Court Street, Ithaca at 7 p.m. We would love to see you there!

This year’s Fall Creek Clean-Up is set for May 3, from 9:00-11:00 am. To participate, or to find out more about the Fall Creek Watershed Committee, contact George Patte at 607-272-8784, or email him at george.patte@verizon.net



The 126 square mile Fall Creek Watershed is highly vulnerable to non-point source pollution. (Cayuga Lake Restoration & Protection Plan, 2000)

Leaders Work to Define Network Focus

By John Mawdsley, Chair of the Issues Committee

As was noted in the winter Network News, there is a great deal of activity in the watershed and opportunities for the Network abound. Consequently, we believe it is critical for the Network to carefully define its objectives and areas of focus. To that end, the Issues Committee has identified the following broad issues as meriting concerted Network attention for the coming year.

- Stormwater Management Programming
- Education on Design and Maintenance of Home Septic Systems
- Landfill Benefits and Concerns
- Lake Level Management

As we educate ourselves regarding the complexities of each issue, our sub-committees will seek to clearly define meaningful opportunities and objectives for Network involvement, and a course of action for the coming year. A full exploration of each proposal will soon be available on the Network website. We invite you to take a look and we ask for your reactions, your involvement, and your suggestions for work in years to come.



Stewardship Begins At Home, in the Yard

By Bill Foster, Watershed Educator

SPRUCING UP AROUND THE HOUSE IS JUST ONE OF THE RITES OF SPRING. GET OUT IN THE YARD AND TRY THESE SIMPLE TIPS TO PROTECT YOUR LANDSCAPE AND YOUR WATERSHED.

As I write these lines, V's of Canada Geese are coalescing in the morning sky to the south, just above our tree line. The formations become more distinct, and soon I'll hear the cantankerous honking that is the goose-version of melody to compliment the wing-beat of returning generations. Having spent fifteen years elsewhere, I'd forgotten how much these avian armadas overhead contribute to my idea of spring. Sure, spring in Philadelphia signals a swelling of the year-round ranks of geese, but the legions that transit the Cayuga flyway- well, that's another story.

Sprouts and blossoms have yet to appear; roadsides are caked in gray, and streams are swollen brown as they carry to the lake a season's worth of the debris revealed by melting snow. But the geese add an upbeat note to what can otherwise be dreary early spring weather in the Finger Lakes. These are the best days to get out and clean up the yard- but this is also a season to be mindful of impacts beyond your yard, as well. By the time you read this article, it will be mid-spring, but the season for lawn care and gardening will



Besides the benefit of quiet, clean exercise, a modern push mower creates finer clippings that can quickly work their way back into your turf.

just be getting into full swing. Here are a few tips that might help you to ensure that the health and beauty of your home doesn't come at the cost of the health and beauty of your watershed.

Drainage: 20% of the U.S. is poorly drained; don't be surprised if that includes a portion of your yard. Spring is a good time to assess poorly drained areas- look for standing water and early greening of plants. Try to identify the source and destiny of water as the season progresses. These damp areas merit special care: plant moisture-tolerant, native species that won't require mowing or applications of fertilizers or pesticides to thrive.

Soil and Lawn Amendments: Your lawn grows fastest during the cool, damp days of spring. If you delay mowing until your lawn is at least four inches high, you'll benefit from more extensive roots systems, and the shading will slow weed establishment. Similarly, delaying fertilizer and weed control applications until late May often works to your advantage.

Erosion Control: Scout for areas of exposed soil and reseed sparse turf. By mid-spring, plant cover should be starting to establish itself. Pay attention to soils along stream banks and swales, heavily shaded, or high-traffic areas. Seek information on the best species to plant in these areas before warmer drier weather sets in. 🐦

For additional lawn and garden care tips, consult the Network website.



CHECK THIS OUT!

Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County offers several classes that will help you improve the health of your lawn, and protect the watershed as well.

Annual Spring Garden Fair, Sat. May 17, 9 am-1 pm, at Ithaca High School, Cayuga Street off Rt. 13. Admission is FREE.

Compost Fair '03, Sat. May 3, 10 am-2 pm, at Cooperative Extension Education Center, 615 Willow Avenue. Admission is FREE.

For more information, contact Pat Curran, Horticulture Program Manager, or Adam Michaelides, Compost Education Program Manager, at 607-272-2292.

Sport Fishing on Cayuga Lake

By Captain Doyle Gene Chatham, Jr.

Cayuga Lake is rich with many species of sport fish, and I spend my time captaining a boat, fishing for trout and salmon. My fishing charter business is called Striker Charters, and I have been fishing the lake since moving to the area from Seattle in 1968.

In the spring of the year, I begin my fishing in shallow water at the south end of Cayuga Lake. The salmonids (e.g.- brown, rainbow, lake trout, landlocked salmon) generally show at the south end because they feel or smell the change of water as spring run-off occurs. At this time, the smelt begin a migration toward tributaries for their spawning run and the trout and salmon wait to ambush them.

The presentation of lures must imitate this food source, and the speed at which the bait moves is critical to the tenth of a knot. I use all top water baits off planer boards at this time of year. These “stick

baits”- Rapalas, Rebels, Bombers, etc.- are long, narrow lures that resemble a stick, or smelt, in shape. I never use live or frozen bait and prefer to keep a large selection of lures on hand in a variety of colors, sizes and actions. “Action” is the way a particular lure moves in the water.

Generally, in clear water, lures with natural colors work best. In more turbid or stained water, bright colors (pink, chartreuse, bright orange) yield the best results.

When out on a charter trip, I troll for fish. In colder water, the troll speed needs to be slow (1.9-2.2 mph). In warmer waters, the speed may increase to 3.0 mph. There are many devices on the market to tell speed, water temperature and depth; and it has taken me years to discover the best products. If you make the investment and plan to use it in Cayuga Lake, be sure to purchase sonar that can measure depths of up to 600 feet!

As the season progresses and the surface water temperature increases, I start to move up the lake getting into deeper water. The lake water temperature starts to stratify, and the thermocline at which the fish hold goes deeper. You can find these different layers by chance or with the help of electronic equipment. Since this equipment can be expensive, I like to find someone on the water who has it already and obtain the



Board member Tad Palmer discovered that fishing on Cayuga Lake can be a rewarding experience. He pulled in this eight pound lake trout last summer near Taughanock Point.

information from him or her.

To place the lures at various depths, I use downriggers. Fishing deeper is important because salmonids prefer water between 49 and 52 degrees Fahrenheit. However, I will keep a few lines on the surface because there are always some rogue fish- especially rainbow trout- that will come up out of their preferred temperature to chase bait. Lake trout, however, are a little different in that they like the water temperature a couple of degrees colder than other fish, and they come much bigger and require larger lures, usually spoons.

My longtime dream has been that of being a fishing guide on the Finger Lakes. I'm happy to have accomplished this. To help ensure the continued health of our lake, I encourage clients to fish responsibly. Remember, it is critical to have a valid NYS fishing license and to follow all fishing regulations outlined by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. 🐟

Gene Chatham is owner/operator of Striker Charters, a local, privately owned fishing charter business. He is also a schoolteacher at Trumansburg Central School. To find out more about sport fishing on Cayuga Lake or Striker Charters, call 256-8214. Good luck and good fishing!



Dave Morehouse Award Established

Dave Morehouse exemplified dedication and action. Throughout his life he worked as an individual and with groups, usually in leadership positions, to protect this lake that he loved. A pioneer and visionary, Dave became actively involved in protecting the Finger Lakes long before doing so was popular. His passing in the summer of 2002 was a great loss (see Network News Summer 2002).



you. Let us know of efforts that make a difference by completing a nomination form, available on our website www.cayugalake.org or by requesting a copy from the office, at 607-532-4104.

Award Criteria

- Demonstrated commitment to the watershed over time (minimum 5 years)
- Active role in restoration and protection of the water resources in the watershed
- Leadership in an endeavor that has lasting effect
- It is not necessary for the nominee to live in the watershed
- Nominations are open to individuals, groups and businesses

Nominations are due to the Network office on July 15, 2003. The Dave Morehouse Award recipient will be announced at Lakefest.

The Cayuga Lake Intermunicipal Organization and the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network have together created the Dave Morehouse Award to honor his contributions and to recognize others who are making a difference to protect our magnificent water resources. Many individuals, businesses, teachers, agricultural producers and community groups are doing wonderful things to preserve and protect our environment. We want to hear from

JOIN US!

Members Keep Our Network Strong

Members are the heart of the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network. Your support allows us to continue teaching, cleaning up streams, forging collaborations, supporting municipal officials, and bringing you timely information. Last summer's membership campaign was a tremendous success and we are counting on you to help make this year's campaign even more successful. During Water Week (May 4-10) we will kick off our renewal effort for the upcoming membership year that runs from July 2003 to June 2002.

You can help by renewing promptly using the printable form on our website, www.cayugalake.org, or by contacting the Network office directly.

The Mission... The Cayuga Lake Watershed Network seeks to protect and improve the ecological health, economic vitality and overall beauty of the watershed through education, communication and leadership.



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- Education
- Communication
- Leadership