



# *The Oquaga Lake Improvement Association Inc.*

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June 2020

Dear Fellow Oquaga Lakers,

These are certainly interesting and challenging times. This will be a summer unlike any before. The ongoing pandemic has affected us in ways we never imagined. It has established new priorities and realities. Some of our members have (fortunately) been able to ride out this storm at the Lake, temporarily leaving their more populated hometowns. Kathy and I have only been to the Lake a couple of times so far this season, keeping our travels at a minimum. Most years ski season runs into early April, followed closely by Lake Season, but not this year. The last 2 ½ months have been surreal and at this point I really need a haircut.

With much sadness, Scott's announced they will not operate this season, ending a 150-year run. Social distancing will be the standard for the foreseeable future. As a result, you will note that the OLIA Event Calendar has been significantly pared back.

All considered, there is still no place like Oquaga Lake and no place we would rather be.

## **LAKE LOWERING**

The Lake is lowered every 5 years on the 00s and 05s. Accordingly, the lowering will begin after the 2020 Season and the lake level will be lowered approximately 5 feet. If you are planning any work on the waterfront or permanently installed docks, or if you are planning a new dock, now is the time to apply for necessary permits and approvals.

Excavation or filling of the shoreline or lake bottom requires permits from the US Army Corps of Engineers and NYSDEC. Permanent docks, expansions to existing docks and property improvements within 35 feet of the shoreline also require Site Plan approval by the Town Planning Board. All construction must be in accordance with the Town Zoning Code for the Lake Protection Overlay. Approvals of this nature take time to process and often require revisions to satisfy Planning Board requirements and conditions. Some projects may require variances necessitating a referral to the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Submit your applications now.

For additional on the Town code please see:

<https://townofsanfordny.com/important-codes-and-permits/>

For additional information on the NYSDEC and USACOE permits, please see the enclosed.

## **OQUAGA WEBSITE**

Please visit [www.oquaga.com](http://www.oquaga.com) for the latest news, announcements, event schedule, and links to the Town Zoning Code. The Association could use help from our tech savvy members to increase our presence on various social media platforms. Let us know if you can help.

## **NEWSLETTER**

*The Oquaga Lake News* (aka *The News*) has resumed and will continue through the Summer.

If you are on the mailing list for the e-newsletter, you should have received the first issue of the 2020 Season about two weeks ago. Here is a link to that issue:

<https://us16.admin.mailchimp.com/campaigns/show?id=1363421>

**If you did not receive your copy of the weekly e-mail letter last season, please send your e-mail address to [olia@oquaga.com](mailto:olia@oquaga.com) or [Barbara@oquaga.com](mailto:Barbara@oquaga.com).**

### **VOLUNTEERS NEEDED**

For the Association to function we need your help. We need support with running events and fulfilling the mission of the Association. Our Mission as stated in the By Laws is:

"To preserve, improve and protect Oquaga Lake and the lands adjoining the same and bordering thereon, all located in the Town of Sanford, Broome County, New York; to develop and promote the said territory as a summer resort; to prevent the contamination of the waters thereof; to further and advance the social and general welfare of the said territory and the owners and occupants thereof and the members of this Association; to do any and all acts necessary to carry into effect the foregoing objectives, including acquiring and holding title and property rights in and to the said Oquaga Lake, adjoining lands and springs and water courses in the vicinity."

Fulfilling this mission requires a persistent, ongoing effort, more than the Board can handle by itself. Attached is volunteer sign-up sheet. Please consider helping fulfill our Mission.

### **COMMITTEES**

At the last several annual Association Meetings we discussed the need to involve more of the Lake Community through the committees and activities. A list of standing Committees is on the website. Call any Board Member to become involved. Board member list is enclosed.

### **SCHEDULE OF EVENTS**

Enclosed is the Schedule of Events for the 2020 season. Please provide comments and suggestions to [olia@oquaga.com](mailto:olia@oquaga.com) or [Barbara@oquaga.com](mailto:Barbara@oquaga.com).

The Fourth of July falls on Saturday this year.

The J Elmer Crowley Fishing Tournament will be the morning of July 4<sup>th</sup>. Kurt Acker is the Derby Master. Events will convene and end at 711 OLR. Watch for the signs.

The day will end with the Ring of Fire. For maximum affect, remember to light your flares at 9:30 pm. We will have the annual "firing of the cannons" to announce the start. Please don't light early.

The Annual Family Day will be held on Saturday, August 1 (always the first Saturday in August) with Gruel-a-thon. Unfortunately, the much anticipated Field Games, Water Sports, and Family Picnic are canceled due to the COVID-19 and closure of Scotts.

Don't forget to mark your calendar for the Annual Membership Meeting on Friday, August 28 (always the last Friday in August) at a time and location to be determined. You will receive a postcard reminder by US mail about 10 days in advance of the event with time and location details. Or watch **The News** e-letter. Your membership, your participation, and your attendance are important.

See the enclosed Event Calendar for details about this Summer's activities. More information will follow in mailed and e-mailed reminders.

### **LAKE CLEANUP DAY**

This year's Cleanup Day is July 11<sup>th</sup>. We will be meeting at Gieskes' (48 Hanson Road) for a walk around the Lake to pick up litter and trash from along the road. Please meet at Koen's house at 10:00. Gloves and trash bags will be provided. We need your help to keep the Lake clean. **Let's get the children out** this year to Give Something Back to Mother Earth and Oquaga Lake.

### **LAUNCHING YOUR BOAT**

Scott's will continue to allow Lake Association members and their guests access to the Lake through their boat launch area.

### **Please Note:**

Scotts requests that we follow a few simple rules.

1. Please mail in the Boat Launch Form and the required fee. (Copy is attached for your convenience and is available to print from our website [oquaga.com](http://oquaga.com).)
2. Contact Gary or Patty Holdrege when you are ready to launch, to obtain the key. (Phone numbers on the Boat Launch Form and the Board of Director's list.)
3. Bring your boat and trailer to the launch **by using the Farmhouse Road**. This is a change from previous years. (Please note: the main entrance to Scotts Resort is closed and should not be used.)
4. The gate must be locked when you finish launching your boat.
5. Exit the launch area by driving by the Farmhouse to the Oquaga Lake Road.
6. Please stay off the grass on either side of the launch access.
7. Do not leave your trailer in the launch area.
8. Return the key when done.

### **BOAT STICKERS**

Don't forget to place your orange stickers on all your watercraft for identification. If you need new stickers contact Barbara at 467-1897 and she will assist you. We will also have stickers available at all official Lake events.

### **BOATER SAFETY**

"Brianna's Law" now requires operators of boats in New York State to have a Boating Safety Certificate: <https://parks.ny.gov/recreation/boating/education.aspx>

The requirement is implemented in phases.

- Born on or after Jan. 1, 1993 will need a boating safety certificate beginning in 2020.
- Born on or after Jan. 1, 1988 will need a boating safety certificate beginning in 2022.
- Born on or after Jan. 1, 1983 will need a boating safety certificate beginning in 2023.
- Born on or after Jan. 1, 1978 will need a boating safety certificate beginning in 2024.
- All motorboat operators regardless of age will need a boating safety certificate beginning in 2025.

We strongly support this requirement as we continue to see very unsafe boating on the Lake including boats traveling in the wrong direction, water skiing and tubing with no spotter in the boat, speeding after dark, speeding near shore, and tubers not wearing PFDs, to mention a few.

Boaters also need to be courteous of others using the Lake. Please be mindful of your wake. There have been instances of swamped boats due to large wakes. Under NYS Navigation Law a boat operator is responsible for damage caused by their wake. Small boats sailboats and canoes always have the right of way over power boats. Large wakes create an unsafe condition for small boats. Please be courteous and avoid tubing and putting out large wakes near small craft.

Also, if the lake is glass and skiers are starting out, please consider holding off tubing until skiers finish. Negotiating large waves is unsafe for skiers.

The *Boating Rules* are enclosed as a reminder. Over the years, we have included laminated color versions of the Rules which we hope you have posted conspicuously in your cottage. Laminated color copies will be available at all Association events. Or just contact Barbara and she will provide one for you.

### **STAR GAZING**

The night sky is awesome. The stars really pop especially on moonless nights. However, over recent years there has been an increase in excessive outdoor lighting around the lake including flood lighting of docks and shore. Outdoor lighting makes star gazing difficult, if not impossible.

Please consider minimizing outdoor lights at bedtime. The night sky never disappoints. Turning off the lights also lowers your NYSEG bill, a win/win. Free apps for smart devices provide real time information and maps showing the position of stars, constellations, planets and even passing satellites. Be sure to check out the Perseid Meteor Shower on August 12.

[https://in-the-sky.org/news.php?id=20200812\\_10\\_100](https://in-the-sky.org/news.php?id=20200812_10_100)

## **SEWERS**

The Town requested that the OLIA continue to remind property owners in the Oquaga Lake Sewer District that the Town has permanent easements on every property in the District. These easements are for the installation, maintenance and repair of the sewer tanks and pipes installed on the lot. It is imperative that the property owner not build or pave within the sewer easement. If you do so, it is at your risk. The Town must be able to access the tanks for maintenance, pump replacement and removal of solids. The Town is also responsible to replace tanks that have failed or are leaking beyond repair.

The homeowner is responsible for the pipes in the house and the pipe from the house to the sewer tank. The Town is responsible for everything else. If it is necessary to dig up the existing system to replace the tanks or Town owned pipes, the Town is responsible only to backfill and grade and seed. The Town will not replace decks, gardens, pavement, or anything else inappropriately installed in the permanent easement.

## **FISHING REPORT (Adapted from Kurt Acker's report)**

The ice broke about a month early this year allowing folks with a valid NY license to start fishing for trout on April 1st (opening day in NY). Eagles and Osprey do not have to play by those rules. Kurt Acker was able to capture these photos of an Osprey catching a fish that was really to big for it to gain altitude quickly and flew between Scotts and the Chestnut for about 20 minutes before dropping from at least 100 feet up in the air (really a great splash when it hit the water).

The Acker family quickly realized that it did not drop it by choice. Right then we saw an Eagle fly right next to the Osprey before landing in one of the pine trees over by Scott's. What a great show nature provided for those of us able to iso-lake during this crazy pandemic!

Fishing like normal has been excellent on the lake again this year. While Kurt has caught mostly rainbows using minnows and worms, he heard that others have been doing really well floating worms just off the bottom for brown trout. A single perch and pickerel have also been landed and released back into the lake as of May 1st. On May 5th, we started seeing both large and small mouth bass swimming around our dock, right when the water temp warmed up to a still numbing 50 degrees.

To help keep the Lake healthy and fishing great, Koen Gieskes continues to work closely with NY states DEC and our fish stocking program. On May 10th, trout were delivered from the Beaverkill Trout Fishery. With help from a few folks, the fish were quickly moved from the transport truck and into the lake. It was really great watching them swim off to eat bugs and grow!

The YouTube video link here was from the fall of 2019. I think its safe to say that the trout were mating and not spawning like the description used. While stocked trout are not supposed to reproduce, it's really great to see that Oquaga Lake's water brings out even the best in nature ;-)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JJKYNNmA4ZY>

Despite all the craziness introduced by COVID-19, we're really looking forward to a great 2020 on Oquaga Lake. Barb Acker along with Beatty Summers (Kenyon Hill, house band from the Red Barn) have started playing with Elisha Summers and The Get Together during nice days on our docks (711 Oquaga Lake Rd). So long as support continues for events like this from our neighbors we plan to continue all the effort behind making these pop up gigs happen.

## **INVASIVE SPECIES**

If your boat has been on another water body, it is extremely important that the boat and trailer be cleaned and free of any vegetation, zebra mussels, etc., before launching. This includes cleaning the bilge. Remember, it only takes one person failing to properly clean their boat to introduce an invasive species to the Lake.

## **BEARS**

Bears and evidence of bears have been observed this spring. Please recognize that we live in bear habitat. Bears are attracted to food and garbage so please keep all food and garbage indoors and secured. Clean up outdoor eating areas and barbeques. And be particularly attentive to any small children and pets. A copy of the *There Are Bears* annual mailing is enclosed. Laminated copies, suitable for posting, are available from Barbara and at any official event.

## **TICKS**

Please carefully check children and pets regularly. The New York State Department of Health website is a good source of information about how to protect your family from ticks and Lyme disease.

<http://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/lyme/>

## **BEAVER**

We have received reports of beaver activity on the lake and we are making arrangements to have them trapped. Please let Mark Millspaugh know when and where beaver have been observed. Contact information is on the enclosed Board of Directors list.

## **FIREWORKS**

Almost everyone enjoys a display of fireworks to celebrate the Fourth of July or for certain significant celebrations. However, fireworks all summer long can be a problem as many pet owners will attest. Some pets need to be sedated in advance. Please be courteous and provide some warning so that your neighbors can plan. If you are planning a large display, please let Barbara know (467.1897) so she can advise the neighbors in the e-newsletter.

## **LAKE MONITORING**

The 2020 water quality monitoring program is approved for funding under the Citizen's Statewide Lake Assessment Program (CSLAP). Oquaga Lake has participated in this program since the early 1990s. A special thanks to Heather and Ben Hanson for agreeing to take over the annual monitoring program. See Heather, Ben, or myself if you are interested in participating in the sampling program.

Water Quality Reports are available on the OLIA website; click on the Documents section.

## **FRIDAY NIGHTS**

We hope to be able to resume the Friday night tradition once the pandemic restrictions have been safely lifted. Social hour fun and frivolity has previously continued at K's Inn (after Friday afternoon Mah Jongg) at 5pm. There will be a message on Barbara's answering machine (467-1897) with this week's venue, and you can find it at the top of the NOW page on the website: [Oquaga.com](http://Oquaga.com). Come join with your Lake Friends and Neighbors for Friday Social Hour, once we can safely gather again.

## **BLUETONE WIND PROJECT**

A 124 Megawatt wind project is proposed in the western part of the Town of Sanford. The nearest tower will approximately four (4) miles north of the lake. The proposed project straddles the Windsor/Sanford line along the Route 41 corridor north of Route 17. Bluestone has received approval from the State Siting Board and construction could commence later this year.

The project has proved controversial with supporters and opponents. Town meetings have been standing room only. Based on the most recent filings, a total of 27 wind turbines are proposed. From the ground surface to the tip of the rotor the turbines will be 670 feet tall. They will be situated on the hilltops and will be quite prominent.

Information regarding the project, including all application materials, is available at the Public Service Commission website:

<http://documents.dps.ny.gov/public/MatterManagement/CaseMaster.aspx?MatterCaseNo=16-F-0559&submit=Search>

As has been our long-standing practice on matters outside of the Oquaga Lake watershed: the Oquaga Lake Improvement Association (OLIA) has maintained a neutral position regarding this project. However, our individual members, friends and neighbors are strongly encouraged to be directly involved in the State and local process, whether for or against or against this project.

A local citizen group, Broome County Concerned Residents, has formed in opposition to the project. The BCCR may be reached at:

PO Box 213  
Windsor NY 13865  
Phone: 607 467 2619  
Email: [BCCRWind@gmail.com](mailto:BCCRWind@gmail.com)

## **DUES**

Membership dues for 2020 are \$100. Enclosed with this letter is the invoice for your Lake Association dues. Your prompt attention to this invoice will help to control expenses and insure our financial security. Thank you in advance for your continued support.

The Oquaga Lake Improvement Association is a Not-For-Profit corporation, made up of property owners, businesses and interested individuals, to promote the interests of the entire Lake community. The Association needs full participation from the Lake community.

Your dues allow the Association to focus on protecting the Lake environment, preserving water quality and assuring our continued enjoyment of the Lake.

Accomplishments of the OLIA include:

- Promoting safe boating.
- Working with the Town to implement zoning and creation of the Lake Overlay Zone.
- Protecting water quality through implementation of the sewer project.
- Performing annual monitoring of Lake water quality.
- Maintaining and repair of the outlet structure.
- Arranging for trapping and removal of beaver.
- Assisting the Town in overseeing the sewer district operations and expenses.
- Conducting annual fish stocking.

These efforts help maintain your property values and hold down the expense of the sewer system.

Everyone benefits. It is important that we get full participation from all property owners.

HAVE A GREAT SUMMER!

For the Board of Directors

Mark Millspaugh  
President