

Niagara County Water Quality Coordinating Committee 2004 Annual Report

I. Introduction

In 1992, The Niagara County Water Quality Coordinating Committee (NCWQCC) was formed to assess the conditions of Niagara County waterbodies, identify and report concerns to county residents, provide accurate information regarding pertinent local water quality issues and to maximize efforts intended to remediate these issues. Together, NCWQCC members aim to protect and enrich Niagara County's water resources for the improved health and viability of the county and its residents.

II. Committee Membership

Committee membership is comprised of numerous local, county and federal entities that have expressed a genuine interest and concern for water quality within Niagara County. As lead agency, The Niagara County Soil and Water Conservation District has teamed up with the following agencies and organizations, to begin the arduous task of protecting and improving our diverse water resources.

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| 1. Victor DiGiacomo | Niagara County Soil & Water Conservation District |
| 2. Mark Seider | Niagara County Soil & Water Conservation District |
| 3. Keith Schultz | Niagara County Soil & Water Conservation District |
| 4. Matt Lanighan | Niagara County Soil & Water Conservation; District Board of Directors |
| 5. Gregory Tessmann | U.S.D.A. Natural Resource Conservation Service |
| 6. James McNeil | U.S.D.A. Farm Service Agency |
| 7. Rene Rickard | Tuscarora Environment Project |
| 8. William Smythe | N.Y.S. Department of Environmental Conservation |
| 9. Tom Brace | N.Y.S. Soil and Water Conservation Committee |
| 10. Ron Gwozdek | Niagara County Health Department |
| 11. Amy Fisk | Niagara County Department of Planning, Development and Tourism |
| 12. Paul Lehman | Niagara County Cornell Cooperative Extension |
| 13. Eric Giberson | Agricultural Consulting Services of WNY |
| 14. Julie O'Neil | Friends of the Buffalo Niagara River Inc. |

III. County Water Quality Issues

Rank	Water Resource	Class	Severity	Water Quality Concern
1	Eighteen Mile Creek	D	Impaired	Fish consumption, fishing and propagation impaired by high concentrations of priority organics, contaminated sediment, land disposal, urban runoff and combined sewer overflows.
2	12 Mile Creek East & West	C	Stressed	Fish propagation, survival, and aesthetics stressed due to hydromodification, on site systems and priority organics.
3	Golden Hill Creek	C	Concerned	Water quality and fishing concerned due to streambank erosion, agricultural runoff and stream sedimentation.
4	Johnson Creek	C	Threatened	Water quality threatened by high nutrient levels and agricultural runoff.
5	Tonawanda/Mud Creek	B/C	Impaired	Fish propagation, survival and aesthetics impaired by streambank erosion, contaminated sediment and high PCB levels.
6	Niagara River	A	Impaired	Fish consumption, propagation and fishing impaired by contaminated sediment, land disposal, high dioxin, PCB & Mirex levels.
7	Cayuga Creek	C	Precluded	Fish consumption precluded due to priority organics, contaminated sediment and high dioxin levels.

8	Sawyer Creek	C	Impaired	Wildlife and fish habitat impaired by urban runoff, litter and nutrients.
9	Fish Creek	C	Stressed	Water quality, fish consumption and fishing stressed due to high priority organics and contaminated sediment.
10	Gill Creek	B/C	Concerned	Fish consumption concerned due to priority organics, urban runoff and contaminated sediment.
11	Bond Lake	B	Stressed	Public recreation stressed due to high concentration of nutrients from ag.
12	Bergholtz Creek	C	Concerned	Water quality and fish propagation concerned due to urban runoff, toxic and contaminated sediment, high phosphorus and PCB levels.
13	NYS Barge Canal	C	Impaired	Impaired fishing and threatened fish propagation due to priority organics and toxic and contaminated sediment.
14	Lake Ontario	A	Impaired	Impaired fishing due to contaminated sediment & high PCB levels.
15	Keg Creek	C	Concerned	Fish propagation and fishing concerned due to streambank erosion and sedimentation.

IV. Water Quality Activities

2004 was a busy year for water quality activities throughout the county. The NCWQCC and the Soil and Water District have been hard at work implementing New York State's Agricultural Environmental Management (AEM) Program, which is designed to document and prioritize water quality impairments in an agricultural setting and to identify specific farms that are contributing to these impairments. Over 150 preliminary surveys were completed with farmers in the Eighteenmile, Twelvemile, Tonawanda and Mud Creek watersheds. Over 75 farmers went a step further and participated in a comprehensive survey that documented current land stewardship and identified sources of water quality impairments.

Under the New York State Agricultural and Non-Point Source Pollution Abatement Program, two of these participating farms were able to receive grants funds to implement Best Management Practices (BMP) to specifically address water quality concerns identified through the AEM program. A silage leachate management system, heifer manure storage system and a bunk silo leachate containment system were constructed for a replacement heifer/beef operation in the Mud Creek watershed and a dairy operation in the Twelvemile Creek watershed. All three Best Management Practices are intended to mitigate obvious water quality and environmental problems present on both farms. Thus far, all three systems have been very successful in extinguishing the sources that once threatened water quality in the county.

Under the direction of Niagara County Department of Economic Development, committee partners assisted with the Eighteenmile Creek Streambank Stabilization and Habitat Restoration Project. This project aimed to improve water quality and habitat for cold water fish species located immediately below the Burt Dam. This was accomplished by improving bank stability and creating non-point source pollution control utilizing inventive bioengineering techniques along existing eroding streambanks. For the success and accomplishments of this project, it has been awarded a New York State Governor's Waterfront Re-Discovery Award and a U.S. Department of Agriculture Team Excellence Award.

In 2000, the NCWQCC and NCSWCD ignited a comprehensive county water quality monitoring program that aimed to provide scientific evidence of water quality impairments in local areas of concern. The program is also intended to enhance data used to prioritize local programs and update the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation Priority Waterbodies List. In 2004, a fixed monitoring station was placed on the main branch of Eighteenmile Creek to sample and monitor baseline and storm event sediment and nutrient loading. The main goal is to significantly reduce nutrient and sediment loadings to the watershed and eventually Lake Ontario. Utilizing funds allocated from the Finger Lakes-Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance (FL-LOWPA), NCSWCD was able to construct a bunk silo leachate containment system and a barnyard/roof water management system on a farm identified as a concern from water quality data compiled in 2003.

Niagara County's Hydroseeding Program was also active in 2004, providing erosion and sediment control to local waterbodies and Lake Ontario. Four acres of highly vulnerable soil was hydrosseeded to provide post-construction soil stabilization at a minimal cost to local and state municipalities. Together, NCSWCD and Town of Hartland Highway Department have hydrosseeded and stabilized over 50 acres of soil that would otherwise be washed into nearby waterbodies.

