

The Oneida Lake Bulletin

Spring 2019

www.oneidalakeassociation.org

Oneida Lake's Sedimentation Issue and the Need for Action

By: OLA Directors, Scott Shupe and Ed Mills

When it rains, IT POURS! This weather scenario has become all too common in recent years resulting in negative impacts to our favorite lake, Oneida. When it rains, we see not only clouds, but cloudy water. Lake impacts include flooding, dangers from floating debris, unsightly muddy waters, loss of recreation time for lake users, loss of valuable soils from the watershed, and loss of habitat for fish, among others. Your Oneida Lake (OLA) Board of Directors is concerned about Oneida Lake's health associated with the sedimentation issue and its impacts on the lake. We are now sounding alarm bells to stimulate **action**.

Historically, the issue of sediments flowing into Oneida Lake has not received the attention it deserves from policy makers. After all, Oneida Lake is the largest inland lake in New York State and is a hub of recreational and tourist activity for all of Central New York. Regional and local land use planning is a relatively recent practice. Many towns did not have, until the 1960s, zoning and building codes. On the international level, the United States and Canada passed the Great Lakes Water Quality Act in 1972 to improve water quality of the Great Lakes through phosphorus reductions. Since Oneida Lake is in the Great Lakes basin, sewage treatment plants in the Oneida Lake watershed were upgraded, leading to improved water quality. Later, the U.S. Clean Water Act (1977) regulated "point source discharge" with less focus on non-point pollution



Eroded stream banks of Butternut Creek, choked with fallen trees.

such as storm water and overland runoff. Since then the loss of precious soils from the Oneida Lake watershed has not received the attention it deserves despite the fact that sedimentation has been identified by the OLA—as well as other stakeholders, and experts—as a priority issue of environmental concern since 2003.

We recognize that land use influences water quality. Urban and suburban development between Oneida Lake and headwater hills has changed dramatically over the last three decades. We suspect that perhaps 10% of the non-forested portion of our drainage basin has been converted to impervious surfaces—roofs, roads, driveways, buildings, and parking lots. Impervious lands lead to surges in runoff during storm events, and sudden, rapid surges in rainfall and snowmelt have induced significant increases in soil erosion. When a raindrop falls today, it no longer soaks into the ground. It hits a ditch, a parking lot, a roof gutter, and then runs into Meadowbrook, Butternut, Limestone, Canaseraga or any number of small



A sediment plume entering Oneida Lake from Fish Creek.

(Continued on page 3)

President's Message

To the OLA Membership,

The Oneida Lake Association's mission is to protect, restore, and preserve the natural resources of our lake and its surrounding ecosystem. We have been doing that mission since 1945 because we do believe in the importance of Oneida Lake to Central New York. The 24 men and women of the OLA Board bring a wealth of expertise and energy to learning the issues and the possible solutions of the Lake. OLA has been called the "watch dog" for Oneida Lake, being the voice that makes our elected officials at the local, State, and Federal levels aware of what is needed to keep this valuable economic resource.

For nearly 30 years, OLA has been the advocate for appropriate cormorant management, attempting to protect this outstanding freshwater fishery. One of the most popular recreational activities throughout the year is fishing. While speaking to the Board, Executive Director Mark Burger of the Onondaga County Soil & Water Conservation District indicated that Oneida Lake provides anglers with more fish per acre than any other lake in the Northeastern United States. We continue to be involved with pulling the invasive water chestnuts each July. We also have been studying the sedimentation in the lake and erosion controls along the tributaries. We brought in Mike Lovegreen, Stream Team Leader of the Upper Susquehanna Coalition, to explain the forces that drive the sedimentation and report on some of the successful solutions that help correct the erosion problem.

We have completed the spotlighting of all seven Fire Department Water Rescues that serve our Lake with this *Bulletin*: Sylvan Beach Fire Department. All seven have well-trained personnel and the necessary equipment to keep our member families and their friends who are on, in and around Oneida Lake, safe.

If you have not been to the www.OneidaLakeAssociation.org Website recently, I encourage you to check it out. We are continuing to put links to research and other information about Oneida Lake. The Website provides a method of getting immediate responses for those members who write into the site. If you see anything that we should be including, or expanding on the Website, please let us know. We want this Site to be your go to place for OLA up-to-date information. If you have not been receiving the Monthly ENews Letters, it is usually because we do not have a working email address for your membership account. Send us a message with your current email address and we will correct your membership account and send you the latest ENews letters.

It has been an honor to be your President these last two years. In May, I will be returning to a Vice President position to help incoming President Bill Girvan. I want to thank Scott Shupe, immediate Past President, VP Bill Girvan and VP John Harmon, Secretary Ryan Asmus and Treasurer Lance Vella for their great help throughout my tenure. No President has had a better Team. And a special mention for Past President Dr. Ed Mills, who was my constant go-to mentor. Thank you, Ed!

Sincerely,

Warren Darby
Warren R. Darby

www.OneidaLakeAssociation.org
president@oneidalakeassociation.org

The Oneida Lake Association, Inc.

Founded in 1945

The Bulletin is published by the Oneida Lake Association, Inc., so that its members may be informed regarding the activities of the association. The Oneida Lake Association, Inc., was organized in 1945 to restore and preserve the natural resources of Oneida Lake and its environs.

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To submit questions or comments about *The Bulletin*, contact editor John Harmon at jpharmon1@gmail.com

Sedimentation Issue

(Continued from page 1)

tributaries that feed Oneida Lake. Sudden, rapid surges in rainfall or snowmelt runoff induce erosion. And that eroded sediment (with nutrients and chemicals) all ends up in Oneida Lake!

What we know:

- The Oneida Lake and Watershed report of 2003 identified the loss of watershed soils through erosion as its top environmental issue.
- The mouths of creeks and local bays have grown shallower leading to safety hazards and lost recreational opportunities.
- Nutrient rich sediment flowing into the lake acts as a medium for nuisance plant growth, loss of recreational opportunities, impacting property values for homeowners and deteriorating our sport fish habitat.
- Urban sprawl has significantly added impervious surface area, which allows runoff to enter streams more rapidly, cutting into streambanks and sending soil into Oneida Lake.
- Modern Canaseraga Creek (Cowelson) is an artifact of the historical dredging and ditching the muck-lands south of the lake. These straight-line stream banks have accelerated erosion into the lake. In 2010, one storm induced runoff eroded at least an acre of muck-land, sending thousands of uprooted onions into the lake.
- Most streambanks are privately owned, yet most land owners do not recognize the negative effect of the erosion and sediment from these streams. On the other hand, public funding for any remedial efforts is almost non-existent.

- Although the 2016 Nine Element Plan has been stalled, it recognizes that sediment entering the lake is an issue.
- Drone and aircraft photos have captured very evident plumes of sediment entering from creek mouths, and moving for miles into Oneida Lake.

What we do not know:

- What are the priority stream locations in the Oneida Lake watershed where remedial action is immediately needed to mitigate stream erosion?
- What is the rate of nearshore sediment accumulation? Although we assume that the sedimentation rate has increased in recent decades, specific and accurate data would be helpful in our quest to protect Oneida Lake.

What we need:

- Implementation projects funded with the support of State and Federal dollars to mitigate soil erosion in the Oneida Lake watershed with the goal of protecting our lake. For example, Townships in the watershed should develop projects to remove fallen trees and other hazards from the banks of tributaries such as Chittenango Creek, with the ultimate goal of stream bank stabilization.
- OLA supports treating Oneida Lake and its watershed as a single ecosystem, not as five separate counties with ownership in the watershed.
- Encourage relevant studies, grants, and projects by local colleges. Use of Google Earth, GIS, drone imagery, and field verification to identify suspect problem erosion areas and sources of sediment.

- Streamlining the permit process for projects designed to reduce sediment loading to Oneida Lake.
- More support by State and Federal Agencies and lawmakers to mitigate sediment issues in Oneida Lake.

What we are doing:

- Working with government officials and local agency experts to identify sources of erosion and to develop strategies for mitigating sources of sedimentation in the watershed.
- The Board has been actively involved in the ongoing 9-Element Watershed Plan development and has recently scheduled a meeting with a nationally recognized stream restoration expert: Upper Susquehanna Coalition Stream Team Leader, Mike Lovegreen.

Sedimentation is not a new issue for Oneida Lake. The OLA has been addressing policy makers on this issue since at least 2003 when it was identified by stakeholders as a high priority need. It is time for policy makers, government agencies, and other stakeholders to rally around the sedimentation issue for the beneficial health and welfare of our lake. **We call for action to implement projects to mitigate sedimentation that impact Oneida Lake.**

In Memoriam

The OLA lost a highly respected member in the recent passing of Ed Olmstead. Ed served on the Board of Directors for many years, serving most notably as Treasurer. Our thoughts are with Ed's family.

The Oneida Lake Business Profile

Say “Hello” to the *Oneida Lake Business Profile*! We hope to make articles such as this one a regular feature in your Bulletin to showcase businesses that serve Oneida Lake Association members. For this inaugural profile, OLA Director Matt Snyder spoke with the owners of an institution that has been around almost as long as the OLA, and that has supported OLA members for decades.

What does your business do and whom do you serve?

We provide retail fishing supplies, live bait, a full-line fly shop, and deep expertise in local fishing. We cater to anglers within about a 50-mile radius. In addition to being an Oneida Lake shop, we see people who fish from the Finger Lakes to the Catskills to the Adirondacks and Ontario.

What is your main connection to Oneida Lake?

There’s no doubt that Mickey’s is an Oneida Lake-centric shop. Co-owner Al Daher has lived on the lake on and off since the 1970s and previously ran the “Pink Store” at the corner of Lakeshore Road and Cicero Center Road. For Al, James, Francis, and the Daher family, Oneida Lake has always been a place to escape to, to visit with very good friends and enjoy having a boat to hop into.

How much of your business is related to Oneida Lake? More than half.

What product or service do you provide that is of interest to Oneida Lake users?

Our strong suits are the baits and rigs for Oneida Lake walleye, perch, and bass – jigs, spinners, and a live bait selection, all tailored to the Oneida Lake fishery. And our expertise and local knowledge help people enjoy great angling experiences. We’ve done some media efforts, such as YouTube pieces on fishing for walleye in the fall, lure making and fly tying for local waters, and showcasing jigs and presentations for open water as well as ice fishing.

Tell us briefly about the history of your business.

Founder “Mickey” Letterman was the

village postman, constable, and a very active volunteer firefighter in North Syracuse. Before that, he was North Syracuse’s best-ever baseball prospect, with a legitimate shot to play in the majors. We (the Dahers) got to know Mickey and his shop well during his 35 years there, and we liked it so much that our family bought it from Mickey in 1984 and have run it ever since.

Are you seeing any changes, trends, or issues on Oneida Lake?

The fish haven’t much changed. The perch and walleye especially still respond to the same basic baits and presentations. Conditions have changed—no doubt about it. We’ve seen some unpredictable weather patterns, as well as changes like invasive species such as zebra mussels, increases in tournaments, and other factors that have changed the game for the angler.

And our clientele have changed the way they shop. For a lot of hardware, like hard baits, rods, and reels, they have gravitated to the internet. But for everything else, including knowledge they can’t find anywhere else, we are still their first choice.

We have managed to adapt to the new conditions—the ebbs and flows and the thick and thin of Oneida Lake fishing.

If you could improve or change things for Oneida Lake and the people who use it, what would it be?

We would improve access for the shore angler, especially in spring or fall. People who don’t have a boat, who maybe have limited means, who love to fish or need to put food on their table, are finding it harder and harder to get access to bays that produce the panfish bite. Maybe DEC

Mickey’s Bait and Tackle

Address: 715 South Bay Road,
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Phone: 315-458-7998

Email: mickeysbt@aol.com

Online: Facebook; YouTube; fishingcny.com

Founded: 1950

At Current Location since: 1950

Number of Employees: Two

Founders/Proprietors: Francis “Mickey” Letterman and his wife, Olive. The shop has been owned and operated by James, Albert, and Francis Daher since Aug. 16, 1984 (which was James’ 20th Birthday).



Albert and James Daher, serving Oneida Lake from one century into the next!

and the surrounding counties could revisit how they provide access to places like Three Mile Bay on the North Shore, consider repurposing or remediating properties on the South Shore, or implementing something like the Public Fishing Rights program here.

We would also like to see more people who live around the lake, connect to it more effectively by being connected with the Oneida Lake Association, with the lake itself, and by being more involved in the lake’s story. We’ve produced a movie trailer about the lake’s story, with the hopes of turning it into a feature documentary. People can take a look at: vimeo.com/228885702

OLA extends its thanks to the Dahers for participating in the inaugural Oneida Lake Business Profile. Do you have an idea for a business to feature? Let us know by e-mailing: snyder.matthew.r@gmail.com.

Annual Meeting: Wednesday, May 1 Gillette Road Middle School

by Cap'n Tony Buffa

On Wednesday, May 1, the OLA will host its 74th annual meeting at the Gillette Road Middle School auditorium. Come and join us for an evening of informative presentations from members of NYSDEC Fish and Wildlife Division, NYS Fish Cultural Station on Oneida Lake, Cornell's Field Station at Shackleton Point, Coast Guard Auxiliary, and Oneida Lake Association officers. Topics include Cormorant Control, Walleye Egg Take for 2019, Walleye-Perch-Bass-Sturgeon, Goby Population Estimates for 2019, and using Digital Calling Service on your VHF marine radio for automated distress hailing. These topics will be presented with an opportunity for questions and answers at the end of the speakers' agenda.

Doors will open at 6:00 pm. You are encouraged to come early with your children so that they can participate in the "Kids' Casting Contest." Prizes will be awarded in age groups of 6 and under, 7-11, and 12-15. Our exhibitors' displays in the school lobby will also be there for your viewing from 6:00-7:00 pm. OLA membership renewals and recruitment will be available in the lobby as well. You do not need to be a member to attend, but we encourage you to join and welcome your support for all the programs the Association monitors.

The official meeting begins promptly at 7:00 pm with a salute to our country's flag and a brief business session. This year's theme is "OLANEEDS YOU." In conjunction with that, I will conduct an open forum discussing the List of Needs published in this *Bulletin*. The OLA needs

your support. Come to the meeting and show how deeply you care. Our lake's well-being is constantly being challenged.

At the meeting, the OLA will give its prestigious "Conservationist of the Year" award to an outstanding local environmentalist. **The meeting will then close with the distribution of door prizes and the drawings for two GoPro Hero cameras.** One winner will be chosen from the attendees and the other from our membership at large.

This is a meeting you do not want to miss, replete with fun, facts, entertainment and love for the lake you hold so special in your life.

Doors open at 6 pm

OLA Needs You!

At our Annual Meeting, we will invite you to participate in a discussion about how we can come together in the best interest of Oneida Lake.

OLA Needs You to tell us:

- Your most urgent concern regarding Oneida Lake.
- Your honest assessment of the OLA and how it can be a better caretaker of Oneida Lake.
- How we can make our annual meeting attract a more robust audience?
- What you think is our most important project for the remainder of 2019... water levels, sedimentation, fish populations, enforcement, invasives, vegetation, launches, algal blooms, political clout, membership, waterfowl, cormorants, etc.?
- If our means of communicating with you is adequate; and if not how can we improve?

When you see something that is harmful to the well-being of Oneida Lake:

- How we can get you more involved in our day to day business?
- What we can do to help you recruit a new member?
- How we can involve youth participation in the OLA?

Anything else that will improve the Oneida Lake Association.

Thank you Tom Pierce!

Longtime OLA director retires

We take a few moments in this *Bulletin* to recognize Tom Pierce for his many years of service to Oneida Lake and to the OLA Board. Tom recently retired from the Board after two decades of terrific work. He served as President of the Board in 2002-2003. In addition to his time in office, Tom participated on the Fisheries Committee, as well as the Legal Affairs and Membership Committees.

Fellow Board member Lance Vella describes him as “the most disciplined of leaders. He delegated responsibilities, and he had a real knack at knowing what strengths individuals had and understood how to motivate them.”

One of Tom’s many contributions to the Oneida Lake came during his term as President. It was at this time that we faced a cormorant crisis. Tom assembled teams to reach out to stakeholders, politicians, and to Cornell University to bring awareness to and develop solutions for the cormorant management problem. His work, and the work of the Board, ultimately led to the USDA Fish and Wildlife Cormorant Management program that, to a degree, is the NYSDEC cormorant program of today. Both programs have preserved the Oneida Lake walleye fishery that remains so important to our members.

As presidents, Tom and Bill Schriever presided over the first herbicide treatment of the invasive water chestnuts between the Route 81 and Route 11 bridges in the Oneida River/Lake. This work has nearly eradicated the infestation in that area.

As a director, he was always vocal in his support for fishing access and maintenance for Oneida Lake fishermen. Projects that he supported include Godfrey Point, South Bay Launch, development of public fishing and access points on north and south shore of Oneida River at the Route 81 bridge, the Cove Road Launch, and the Dock in Cleveland, NY.

During his time on the Board, Tom’s focus for Oneida Lake was to get the walleye population back to one million. Tom always stayed vigilant to obtain this goal. Tom has a belief that fingerlings, not fry, could be the answer to having continued strong year classes of walleye. His belief is shared by other states who continue to stock fingerlings. Studies show that fingerlings have a much better survival rate. Tom served as the force behind one of the fingerling stocking events that occurred on the lake.

OLA Director Lance Vella stated that “Tom is definitely a people person, always a joy to be around. When important topics/projects/issues came up his first comment would always be ‘Let’s go talk to them.’ He knew how to open doors and find resolutions in a timely and sometime not so timely manner, but he would always stay focused.”

Thank you, Tom, for your many years of service to the Board and to Oneida Lake. Enjoy your retirement!



Notice of Elections for the Board of Directors

The annual election for members of the OLA Board of Directors will take place at the Annual Membership Meeting on May 1 (see page 5). Members in good standing who attend the meeting will have the opportunity to vote on the following slate of OLA director candidates who have been selected by the Board of Directors Nominating Committee to stand for election to three-year terms on the Board: Warren Darby, Tom Giufre, Lance Vella, Patricia Cerro-Reehil, Kurt Snyder, Matt Snyder, and John Harmon.



Youth Casting Contest

For one hour prior to the 74th Annual Oneida Lake Association (OLA) meeting, CNY Youth Fishing Educators will sponsor a **youth casting contest**. This fun event will take place on Wednesday, May 1, 2019, from 6-7 p.m. only. Location of the contest and meeting is Gillette Road Middle School.

3 Casting Divisions

Yellow Perch	Ages: 6 & Under
Smallmouth Bass	Ages: 7 through 11
Walleye	Ages: 12 through 15

Prizes will be awarded for First Place in each of the three divisions. There are no contest entry fees. For further information contact Chairman Bill Girvan at (315) 736-5738 or bill.girvan@yahoo.com.

Oneida Lake Fish Health in 2018

By Jana Lantry (NYSDEC Region 6 Fisheries Manager) and Andy Noyes (NYSDEC Fish Pathologist)

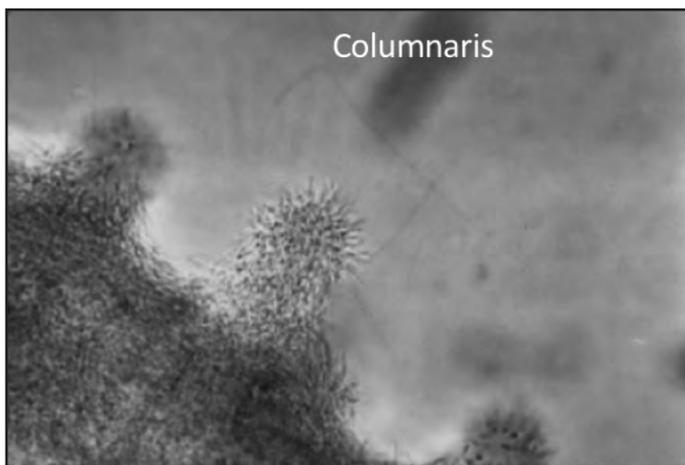
In 2018, NYSDEC and Cornell University received several reports of largemouth and smallmouth bass in Oneida Lake with fish health issues (e.g., lesions). Fish were infected with multiple pathogens that commonly exist in fish populations throughout New York. The bass submitted for disease screening in 2018 were positive for common pathogens such as a parasitic helminth and bacteria (e.g., motile *Aeromonas septecimica*, *Edwardsiella tarda*, *Columnaris* (see image below.) Some were positive for Largemouth Bass Virus (LMBv) which has been found in some New York waters, including Oneida Lake, since 2004. Typically, the presence of these pathogens does not cause a problem unless some other factor(s) triggers a disease response. Observations of lesions, dead, and nearly dead fish were most prevalent when water temperatures were relatively high. The disease event in 2018 was likely triggered by temperature as the average in Oneida Lake was the fourth warmest since 1975. Other factors may have also contributed to the disease-related event (e.g., stress, harmful algal blooms).

Anglers were concerned that LMBv was present in some of the fish that were screened for pathogens; however, the 2018 event that occurred in Oneida Lake was the first in New York confirmed to be associated with the virus

that was first detected over a decade ago. This event was similar to a smallmouth bass mortality event that occurred in the Pennsylvania portion of the Susquehanna River five years ago. Smallmouth bass in Oneida Lake and the Susquehanna River had advanced skin lesions and a host of parasites. Nothing like this was seen in any LMBv kills investigated in the southern states where the virus was first detected in 1995 in largemouth bass. Largemouth bass mortality events in southern states were similar to each other (i.e., bass had no obvious lesions but did have hyper-inflated swim bladders) and impacted larger sized largemouth bass but not small fish or smallmouth bass. It is unknown why LMBv has not impacted southern smallmouth bass populations in the over 20 years it has occurred there. Unlike the southern states, events in Oneida Lake and Pennsylvania did not appear to target largemouth bass rather nearly all sizes of smallmouth were impacted.



Photos by: Rod Getchell, CU



In 2019, Cornell University will continue to monitor the smallmouth bass population and NYSDEC will collect fish for testing if disease outbreaks occur. Anglers should contact the Region 7 Fisheries Unit at (607) 753-3095 ext. 213 if diseased fish are observed.

Thank you to all of the Fire Departments that serve Oneida Lake!

Featuring: Sylvan Beach Fire Department

The Sylvan Beach Fire Department has a twenty-five foot Chris Craft center console Rescue Boat. It is powered by twin 250 hp Mercury four-stroke engines. It was purchased in 2010 from a private dealer. This vessel is kept at Snug Harbor, an enterprise of the Oneida Indian Nation. The boat is equipped with GPS, FLIR and side scan sonar. There are multiple radios on board which provide communication with the four different counties that border Oneida Lake. The Fire Department recently added a CAFS (compressed air foam system) to the vessel which creates approximately 200 gallons of foam. Foam is pivotal in putting out boat fires. This boat is equipped with BLS (basic life support) equipment – an AED, BLS drugs including Epi-Pens, albuterol, oxygen and glucose.

The Sylvan Beach Fire Department also has a 15 foot aluminum boat, a jet ski, and three 12 ft inflatables. All these smaller vessels allow Fire Department Rescuers to get into shallower water areas where the 25ft Chris Craft vessel is unable to navigate.

In the winter season SBFDD uses a 2003 Rivercraft 16 ft Airboat. This vessel is able to go across ice, snow and water. It is one of only three airboats on Oneida Lake able to assist in ice rescues. This boat has been used numerous times on Oneida Lake already this year for search and rescue operations. The Airboat has also been used throughout Oneida County for rescues in flood prone areas. It is equipped with GPS and night vision. Like the Chris Craft vessel, it is also outfitted with basic life support equipment.

Many thanks to Rick Johnson, Fire Chief, and the rest of the crew at the Sylvan Beach Fire Department.



Sylvan Beach's Water Rescue

Water Rescue Fire Departments That Serve Oneida Lake

We are fortunate to have seven Water Rescue Fire Departments that serve Oneida Lake. They are:

Brewerton Fire Department	South Bay Fire Department
Bridgeport Fire Department	Sylvan Beach Fire Department
Cleveland Fire Department	West Monroe Fire Department
Constantia Fire Department	

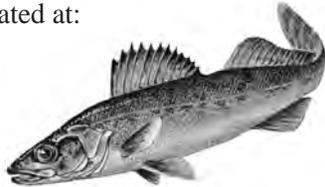


Chittenango Lions Club 41st Walleye Derby on Oneida Lake May 4-5 2019

HIGHLIGHTS

- \$15 Entry fee
- Cash and merchandise prizes
- Door and Bonus prizes
- 50/50 raffle
- 3 tagged fish contest (\$5,000 • \$2,500 • \$1,250)
- Top 25 size contest (\$75 to \$1,500)

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The Oneida Lake Association Moves Into the 21st Century

As you many have noticed, on your membership application, you have the option to get the Bulletins electronically instead of being mailed. This saves the organization in printing, postage and mailing costs! To communicate more routinely we started an e-newsletter that is emailed out periodically. We have noticed however, that many of you don't "open" the file to read the newsletter sent from Constant Contact – Please be sure this email doesn't land in your Spam folder! We want to communicate with you, our members, easily and efficiently – email is a great way to do that!

~ Thank you!

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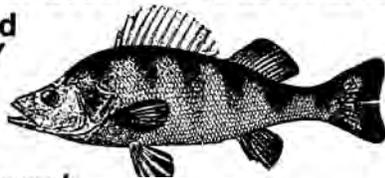
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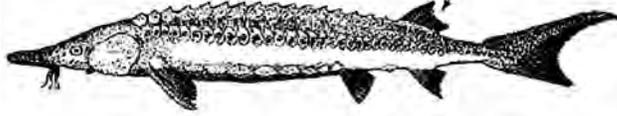
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