



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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New Report Shows Cleanup Efforts Are Producing Positive Results for Owasco Lake

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Owasco Lake is one of our region's most unique and magnificent natural resources. Owasco Lake not only provides drinking water for the City of Auburn and the dozens of villages and towns in our region, it also fuels our local economy and plays a critical role in our job producing tourism industry. That is why protecting Owasco Lake continues to be a top priority for me.

Dr. John Halfman, the lead scientist at the Finger Lakes Institute, which I helped to create to protect our region, recently released his annual study on the water quality of the eight eastern Finger Lakes. I am pleased to report that Dr. Halfman's research shows that Owasco Lake has demonstrated the most improvement of all of the Finger Lakes and has received its cleanest rating to date!

This outstanding progress is the result of one of the largest watershed cleanup projects in our State's history. For the last several years, I have fought aggressively alongside members of Owasco Watershed Lake Association (OWLA), the City of Auburn, Cayuga County, the Finger Lakes Institute, and hundreds of concerned citizens to help preserve our beautiful Owasco Lake.

Just a few years ago, we faced serious concerns over the quality and health of Owasco Lake. The lake had high levels of phosphorus and other chemicals, as well as an abundance of invasive weeds. Working with members of OWLA as well as people in our local communities, I initiated meetings with health officials, scientists and representatives of all levels of government to identify the causes of the pollution of Owasco Lake as well as the steps needed to improve the health of the Lake.

In an effort to assist in this vital cleanup effort, I was able to secure critically needed state funds that allowed the Finger Lakes Institute to identify and deal with the specific problems facing Owasco Lake and to begin to implement measures to put the lake and its watershed on a healthy and sustainable path. This funding also helped to purchase badly needed equipment to harvest the weeds and clear the shorelines of the lake. It also allowed the County to hire a full time watershed inspector.

One of the largest threats to Owasco Lake was the outdated facilities at the Groton Wastewater Treatment Plant. The plant was discharging high amounts of phosphorous into the lake and its watershed. Working in collaboration with the County and the State Department of Environmental Conservation, we cut the amount of phosphorus discharge from the wastewater treatment plant in half and helped Groton to make needed upgrades to its sewage treatment system.

In addition, I worked with OWLA and the Finger Lakes Institute to develop a state of the art monitoring system called the Owasco Lake Watershed Network (OWN), which quickly pinpoints the exact location of any contamination or threat to the Lake.

Dr. Halfman's latest report demonstrates that our efforts to preserve, protect, and promote Owasco Lake have made a positive impact on the health of the watershed. We must continue to do everything we can to move forward and to keep our focus on the health and viability of our lake and its watersheds. I look forward to maintaining the strong partnerships that we have established with all of the incredible organizations and individuals who have been working so hard to secure a cleaner and brighter future for Owasco Lake.