

Water Quality (Erosion & weeds) Chapter #17

Water quality of Silver Lake is the main concern of the Silver Lake Association. It is not just water testing and how clean the water is, but also includes erosion, weeds, sediment, run-off, algae blooms, and water recreation. The SLA Water Quality Committee along with the Water and Soil Conservation District, and the Watershed Commission worked together to do what they could with the resources they had to keep Silver Lake Clean and enjoyable for all.

The next few chapters will show the extent of involvement the SLA went through to address the issues and concerns to improve the water quality of Silver Lake.

This letter was written by Melissa Weaver of Soil Conservation Service about the January 1996 thaw. **“Upon the January snowmelt and subsequent run-off events, serious erosion took place in the stream tributaries and road ditches that lead to, and empty into Silver Lake. Water jumped tributary banks and ran over bridges (i.e., private drive below the golf course; golf cart bridge upstream near West lake Road); and ran between cottages rather than taking its usual route (i.e., the existing conduit at the bottom of Private Drive #3). Soil and Water Conservation District and the Wyoming County Resources Committee have a number of “High Water” slides taken during the run-off events and video footage of the damage left behind. Tributaries changed course within themselves. 10’s of feet of stream banks were eaten away and carried towards or to Silver Lake. Sediment bars were deposited in tributaries. There was much undercutting below grass and among tree root systems, and homeowners’ lawns dropped into the streams and ditches.**

Soil and Water Conservation District did a little research and found that the highway departments did not have jurisdiction over the road ditches along private drives, the cottage owners do, and they own them. Other tributaries such as the ones that run through the golf course are owned by the property owners.

Money, of course, is always an issue, as is getting some homeowners to sign easements to allow equipment on their property to remedy the situation, and giving permission to do the work in the first place.

The SWCD has addressed the money issue in our 1996-1997 FL-LOWPA (Finger Lakes-Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance, formerly the Aquatic Vegetation Control Program) Program Narrative. If the Water Resources Board gets the \$1.5 million we are trying for, Wyoming County will receive almost \$60,000. If the WRB does NOT get the \$1.5 million for the 24-county area, then Wyoming County will only be getting \$38,461 which will affect how much can be done in the immediate future.

Also addressed in the Program Narrative is Manure Storage Facilities. This is primarily because of the concern over Cornell-Crest Dairy Farm’s original project proposal which was for only a 30-day storage. The Silver Lake Watershed Commission sensed a need for at least 60 days or longer storage with the farm’s proximity to Suckerbrook, the largest tributary of Silver Lake. They are considering funding for a larger storage facility. We would like to contribute to this effort also and have addressed this in our Narrative for this year’s funding.”

Mellissa then asked people to send letters to state legislators urging funding is provided. She said the SCS obtained \$13,000 grant to repair the Mueller run-off problem but neither the owner, neighboring farm or town were willing to pick up the remaining \$2,500 cost.

The Watershed Commission which was comprised of representatives from the communities that draw water from Silver Lake acts to protect and improve water quality by supporting control of pollution. At this time it was having an identity crisis. The SLA had always had input to the Commission and would urge it to continue. The survey the Commission sent to the lakera had been compiled. People were most concerned with weeds, property maintenance, number of boats and views. This then, lead to a discussion on weeds in Silver Lake. Sutton Tract Director Roy Schneggenburger reported on the research he had done on weed harvesting, from buying one to leasing one. Members

at the annual meeting felt leasing a weed harvester for 21 hours at \$3000 would be supported by most lakers. Carol Koziel wanted to know if the harvester would do the inlet. Research didn't support harvesting as effective and lakes with harvesters, such as Conesus, were getting rid of them. Upon a motion by Institute Tract Director Clarence Clark to send a letter out and invite people to contribute to a dedicated harvesting fund, second by Roy, with 19 in favor, and 11 against, it passed.

Weeds may take a minimum of two years to get out depending on funding available and how long to implement final recommendations. Cutting weeds prior to that is up to the SLCOA. Weed harvesting would not affect the study once weeds had been identified. The SLCOA would look to the Watershed Commission to purchase equipment.

Cottager John Tiede urged the SLA to look into obtaining a weed harvester for Silver Lake. Soil Conservation Service may obtain grant funds that would be applied to rent or purchase a harvester. It was an item that required input from NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, Wildlife Federation, and local municipalities. SLA President Elaine Cook said the SLA did not maintain a budget or staff that could support procurement, operation, maintenance and liability for a harvester. In the past 4-8 years, SLA supported efforts to stop nutrients that encourage weed growth from entering the lake as a first step. Elaine recommended that cottagers retain services of a private harvester. Other steps would include placing black plastic under and around docks. Chemical applications around docks were not encouraged as Silver Lake is a source of drinking water. Health Department Sanitarian and SLA member John Pachuta said dredging would disturb inactive toxins stored in the lake's silt bottom which Perry's water treatment plant was not equipped to filter out.

Vegetation (weed) Control Report was given by Melissa Weaver of Soil Conservation Service. She contacted lakes in 9 other counties where harvesting was done and compiled a report. Costs, equipment used, and labor varied, O & M costs ranged from \$1000 - \$3000 per year. Most machines could not operate in less than 3 feet of water. The general consensus was: can't keep people happy; very short term solution; stay with upland pollution-prevention projects; very beneficial as you remove nutrients; harvesters cause more weed growth by reproducing from the scattered pieces; Melissa looked at costs to rent Lake LeRoy/LaGrange harvester. North end of Silver Lake is very weedy, residents there wanted something done.

SLA had agreed to help FOLA financially by offering to sell the new SLA license plate holders and several would be available at the Annual Meeting. They would cost \$5 each and all proceeds would go to FOLA. FOLA was also looking for a donation of a computer. If SLA continued the FOLA work, it was vital other SLA Tract Directors attended those meetings. Don was the new FOLA Director; he was also a regional representative. The license plate said "Support Clean Lakes", in blue lettering over a black frame.

Gilly Burlingham of Soper Road, a resident of the Silver Lake Watershed and a new SLA member, discussed and asked members to support the Great Lake's Water Quality Initiative. Silver Lake is in the Great Lakes Basin. The initiative sought to stop point-source pollution from entering the Great Lakes.