

Visioning for Lake Ontario Engages Community and Agency Decisionmakers

To better align public input on the conservation and restoration needs of the Lake Ontario basin with federal, state and local management plans, New York Sea Grant (NYSG) planned and co-facilitated a public participation and involvement initiative. A series of open communication forums for community and agency stakeholders was held in 2012.

NYSG and the Finger Lakes–Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance (FOLLOWPA) partnered to plan and implement a series of six workshops to gather the opinions and input of stakeholders, including municipal leaders, state and local government agency representatives, landowners and residents, non-government agency staff, and the general public. Inquiry focused on the current condition of the Lake Ontario basin, the identification of priority projects for implementation, and additional needs and concerns for the local area and the Lake Ontario basin holistically.

The workshops were held primarily in Lake Ontario shoreline communities plus one watershed area inland. A media campaign invited residents and resource managers from throughout the basin to attend any of the workshops. Participants were given the opportunity to hear presentations by FOLLOWPA, NYSG, and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and to submit input on the current condition of the lake, its priority tributaries, and research priorities.



New York's waters represent a diverse resource to stakeholders with varied interests. Visioning workshops for Lake Ontario in 2012 helped find common ground for moving ahead with restoration initiatives. Photo: Mary Penney, NYSG

Nearly 100 Lake Ontario basin residents were given the opportunity to provide input through discussions and written surveys.

Workshop proceedings, with stakeholder input, will be made available to federal, state and local agencies as well as the public in spring 2012. Resource management agencies will use the proceedings that captured the weighted interests of those who live, work, and play in the Lake Ontario basin to help determine agency research priorities and leverage funds for Lake Ontario basin projects.

“The public needs a voice in the discussion of critical issues, with more emphasis on problem solving. Multiply this effort across the board,” commented Maxine Appleby of Sodus Point, NY.

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