



NYSG is collaborating with NOAA and diverse local partners to support designation of a Lake Ontario National Marine Sanctuary

## Support for Lake Ontario National Marine Sanctuary Designation

National Marine Sanctuary (NMS) designation brings economic, environmental, recreational, historic, cultural and educational benefits to NMS waterfront communities. New York Sea Grant (NYSG) is collaborating with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and representatives of a four-county region to support designation of a Lake Ontario NMS.

The proposed Lake Ontario NMS covers 1724 square miles, with 43 known shipwrecks (as old as the 1700s), one submerged aircraft, and potential to add more sites. Its assets

include the *David W. Mills*, New York State's first Submerged Cultural Preserve and Dive Site in the Great Lakes region; and the *St. Peter* on the National Register of Historic Places. Oswego County Administrator Philip Church applied for Lake Ontario NMS designation in 2017 on behalf of Oswego, Jefferson, Cayuga and Wayne counties.

NYSG has provided public education on New York's Great Lakes underwater resources in partnership with maritime museums statewide, county tourism offices, and the Great Lakes Seaway Trail National Scenic Byway. In 2022, NYSG collaborated with Church, NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries Great Lakes Regional Coordinator Ellen Brody, Lake Ontario National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council Vice Chair and Member-at-Large Katie Malinowski, H. Lee White Maritime Museum, and WPBS Public Television for an 8-minute story highlighting the proposed Lake Ontario NMS. NOAA provided video for the story that first aired on August 23, 2022, as part of WPBS Weekly: Inside the Stories, a weekly current affairs show. Local media published note of the availability of the segment online. WPBS Senior Producer Joleene DesRosiers noted that other PBS affiliates, including Detroit Public TV, requested the opportunity to air the segment.



The NYSG "Great Shipwrecks of New York's Great Lakes" exhibit has traveled to the Great New York State Fair and to museums statewide since 2014. Above: Museum of Science & Technology, Syracuse, NY. Photo: NYSG

**LAKE ONTARIO**

**BRIG-SLOOP HMS ONTARIO**

**Against the Rebels**  
HMS Ontario was constructed by the British at Carleton Island in 1780 during the American Revolution. This Brig-Sloop had two masts and 22 guns, but was up against a more powerful foe than the Rebels: mother nature. Sailing to Oswego from Niagara on October 31, 1780, HMS Ontario was overcome by a fierce storm, claiming the lives of at least 88 men, women, and children.

Every person on board of her has perished.  
- Alexander Fraser  
Nov. 8, 1780

**LAKE ONTARIO At a Glance**

- Fed by the Niagara River, flows into the St. Lawrence River
- "Lake of Shining Waters" in the Huron language
- 193 miles (311 km) long
- 53 miles (85 km) at its widest
- 802 feet (244 m) deep
- 432 trillion gallons (1638 km<sup>3</sup>) water
- Borders New York and Ontario
- As many as 1,000 shipwrecks

*She fell in a noble struggle for size to the soil that held a thousand Rebels.*  
Robert Hamilton  
March 25, 1780

**SCHOONER ST. PETER**

I do not know what caused her to go down. It might have been that the coal listed to one side and caused her to careen. Or ... the force of the waves broke in the cabin doors.  
- Captain John Griffin

**A three-masted schooner, St. Peter was an impressive sight on the water.** On October 25, 1838, she loaded up with a cargo of coal in Oswego, NY, bound for Toledo, OH. That night a violent blizzard hit Lake Ontario, bringing 70 mph winds, 20-foot seas, and freezing sleet. Unable to reach the safety of Welland Canal, the captain turned back east. The distressed vessel was sighted from shore, and the tugboat Proctor went out to assist, but it was too late for the crew. Only the captain survived.

We steamed down the lake as fast as we could. We saw her suddenly list to port once and ... the second time she went down. We could see nothing but about eight feet of a mast sticking up out of the water.  
- Captain Gray, Tugboat Proctor

### Partners:

- NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries
- Oswego, Cayuga, Wayne, and Jefferson Counties
- Lake Ontario National Marine Sanctuary Advisory Council

WPBS Weekly Lake Ontario National Marine Sanctuary story:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4CCiNAQ71fo>

The Sea Grant Focus Area for this project is Resilient New York Communities and Economies.

New York Sea Grant is a joint program of Cornell University, the State University of New York, and NOAA. Contact: New York Sea Grant Extension, 112 Rice Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853; [www.nyseagrant.org](http://www.nyseagrant.org).

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