



Owasco Watershed Lake Association (OWLA)

2016 Watershed Strategic Action Plan with Updating Process

Last updated Saturday, February 27, 2016



Published: November 15, 2016

Abstract

This Owasco Watershed Lake Association (OWLA) Strategic Action Plan update represents the products of two collaborative planning processes (described in Appendix A). During these sessions, OWLA members identified numerous goals, objectives, and actions to achieve toward the improvement of water quality in Owasco Lake, beginning in 2016. Members then ranked these hopeful, inspirational, yet action-oriented potential achievements. The top 10 responses as ranked by OWLA members were integrated into the Action Plan Objectives and Activities charts, beginning on page 6 (also see Appendix B, Table 1). Ideas arising from these processes that reiterated ideas already incorporated in the charts have been highlighted. The full list of ideas generated during the 2016 update processes can be found in Figure 1, beginning on page 10 (also see Appendix B, Table 2). The narrative of the planning processes used can be found in Appendix A.

Table of Contents

Abstract	2
Vision	3
Mission	3
Values	3
Major Goals of the Action Plan	3
OWLA Will Work with Community Partners to:	4
Key Strategies	4
Desired Outcomes	5
Working Definitions	5
Action Plan Objectives and Activities	5
I. Infrastructure	6
II. Communication and Education Events	7
III. Project Activities	8
IV. Fund Development	9
Figure 1. Responses to 2016 Strategic Action Plan Update Question: What Should OWLA Achieve in 2016?	10
Appendix A: OWLA 2016 Strategic Planning Updates	13
Session 1: What should OWLA achieve in 2016?	13
Background	13
Process Implementation	13
Session 2: Incorporating Updates	15
Background	15
Process Implementation	15
Appendix B: Transcription of Strategic Planning Session I Notes	17

Vision

We will restore Owasco Lake to a condition where we can enjoy healthy, quality water for drinking and recreational use; where Owasco Lake is once again recognized throughout NYS as an important treasure of the Finger Lakes region; and where we regain the legacy left to us so that we can give it to our children and our grandchildren and all the generations that follow.

Mission

We are the voice for Owasco Lake and the Watershed, and will actively engage in an ongoing process for coordinating, documenting, and tracking all of the strategies and activities that are designed to restore our watershed and improve water quality for both drinking and full recreational use of Owasco Lake and its watershed.

Values

1. **Flexible:** We will carry out a wide range of small and large clean-up and restoration projects based on our capacity and resources that are designed to make a long-lasting improvement in the quality of Owasco Lake.
2. **Data Driven:** We will measure our progress on an ongoing basis. We will put our time, money and energy where it is best used to move us towards our defined goals. We will be flexible and change directions quickly when we have to.
3. **Teamwork.** We need everybody to volunteer to work together to carry out restoration activities. We will recruit volunteers of all ages to be members of teams to get the work activities done.
4. **Science-based:** We will find and use proven scientific, research-based projects to restore each of the sub-watershed areas of Owasco Lake, including the streams and creeks and wetland buffers of the watershed.
5. **Enthusiasm and Optimism:** We will expect and celebrate success and overcome all hurdles and remove all barriers in our way.

Major Goals of the Action Plan

1. Engage everyone involved in deciding what works based on science;
2. Carry out effective strategies that restore the watershed waterways and lake areas; and
3. Improve and influence funding and policy decisions at the local, state, and national level to strengthen water quality management and obtain adequate funding support for needed activities;
4. Work in concert with the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) *Nine Minimum Elements to Be Included in a Watershed Plan for Impaired Waters*.

OWLA Will Work with Community Partners to:

- Focus public attention and community resources to respond and resolve all of the critical issues and needs of Owasco Lake.
- Track and monitor progress and results and make sure we get what is needed to clean-up the watershed and lake and prevent the wide range of sources of nutrients and pollution from harming the lake.
- Influence public officials to pass the necessary laws, policies, and funding to support activities and practices that will help the Lake.
- Carry out a wide range of cove, shoreline, stream, wetland, and property clean-up, control weeds and invasive species, and planting projects that are carefully designed to make both an immediate and long-lasting impact on the quality of the waterways in the watershed and all areas of the lake.
- Carry out a communications campaign to make sure all area residents and visitors know what they can do on an individual, family, and business basis to help clean-up the lake and watershed, and do no more harm to the lake
- Find the money needed for clean-up and restoration projects to meet the critical issues of Owasco Lake through membership contributions, fundraising, and grant development.

Key Strategies

- Inform decision-makers routinely of the needs of Owasco Lake and conduct activities and events that increase knowledge and raise awareness of the urgency to act now to improve lake conditions.
- Launch a community education and awareness campaign to engage all residents and visitors, including specific outreach to children and youth and their families through our K-12 schools.
- Create partnerships with all of the current public and private groups and organizations working on any issue related to Owasco Lake and the watershed, and surrounding areas as appropriate.
- Inventory what is needed to restore the lake using existing studies and reports, and observations and testing where needed.
- Work with farmers to reduce excessive nutrients and soil erosion that enters streams and results in lake issues including: unnatural weed growth, problems with fish, and blue-green algae – which is dangerous to the health and safety of residents and our water supply.
- Prevent and suppress invasive species, and reduce weed growth through multi-year, four-season projects designed to clean-up and restore coves and stream banks to natural states.
- Engage all homeowners and businesses in the watershed to become contributing members of OWLA, both in time and money, to support the organization's administration and to carry out the wide range of needed clean-up and planting projects.
- Develop partnerships with all of the organizations and funders that are responsible for activities that impact the watershed and lake, and serve as the steward for the lake to strengthen communications and advocate for a common mission of protecting and improving water quality in the lake.
- Recruit volunteers, businesses, landowners, community organizations and funders to actively participate in OWLA projects and activities. Develop special effort to recruit youth and seniors.
- Raise awareness of the importance of appropriate laws, public policies, and funding to support programs, projects, and grants that result in measurable water quality improvements in the lake and watershed.

Desired Outcomes

Our action plan's effectiveness will be measured by a range of specific short and long-term achievements including:

- Improvements in water quality in the lake and waterways as measured by ongoing water testing;
- Full recreational use of the lake, including fishing, swimming, boating, and other water sports; prevention and suppression of invasive species found on land and in water (e.g. Asian Clam, Zebra and Quagga Mussels, etc.);
- Reduction of excessive and unnatural weed growth in the lake, along shorelines, and within watershed;
- Reduction of phosphorus levels in the lake to natural levels;
- Increased social and economic health and vitality of Auburn and towns around the lake, through increased tourists, summer guests, and returning summer residents; and
- Owasco Lake and its watershed no longer overburdened by nutrients, sediment and other pollutants that keep people from enjoying the lake.
- Legislation, Public policies and land use regulations that ensure protection of environmentally sensitive areas and preserve natural riparian habitats, wetlands and waterways.

Working Definitions


Natural: Returning to a condition and function that existed prior to the degradation of water quality and lake conditions that created a balance within the waterways and lake that protects natural habitats for fish and wildlife, and health and wellness and enjoyment of residents. A natural state would manage the current excessive runoff of nutrients, sediments, pesticides from agricultural lands; prevent and suppress invasive species and restore native plants and vegetation to decrease unacceptable levels of erosion of our stream banks; and take steps to reduce the negative impacts of non-permeable surface that damages groundwater and natural filtration systems within the watershed.

Restoration: All lakes are naturally evolving and filling in as they age. However what should take 400 years may not be taking 40 years. We want to stop this acceleration and return Owasco Lake Watershed to a condition before the degradation of water quality as a result of erosion, sediment and nutrient overloading, and invasive species, much of which is the direct result of human interference, development, agriculture, and negligence. These actions and choices have resulted in an ecological imbalance and dysfunction that can be stopped; and steps taken to restore, reestablish and stabilize natural channels and natural filters to ensure clean water is entering the lake. Owasco Lake is especially sensitive to environmental stresses because of its large watershed, significant agricultural landscape, and current accelerating erosion of stream banks and storm runoff from agricultural lands.

Action Plan Objectives and Activities

There are four key areas of investment in the Owasco Watershed Lake Association's Action Plan during its first year. The charts presented below are not designed nor intended to prioritize goals, but rather to present the "chords of action" that are dependent only on the capacity of the partners with whom we will continue to engage on these activities.

Key to Status Updates:

I	Initiated	OI	Ongoing and Improving	*	Reiterated in 2016 update
IS	Implementation Started	C	Completed		Status newly updated
PA	Process Advancing	N	Newly Added Item		as of (11/15/16)

^ Top 10 ideas generated by OWLA members during the 2016 Strategic Action Plan Updating Processes. See Figure 1 (below) for all ideas generated.

I. Infrastructure

Key Outcome Goals

- Establish a sustainable infrastructure for OWLA that ensures they are poised for growth and opportunity to realize their vision and mission.

Objectives	Tasks, activities, and events to support objectives	Status
1. OWLA Administrative Structure	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish an Annual Budget Process 2. Establish an effective OWLA office 3. Implementation framework for consultants (grants, projects) 4. Strategic Plan Process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Base Line, Periodic Updates, Annual Report Card 	<p>I</p> <p>OI</p> <p>PA</p> <p>OI</p>
2. Volunteer Development Plan	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Board Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inventory of board skills • Board leadership program (duties, responsibilities, expectations) • Board recruitment, training retention, and recognition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include as part of update process? 2. Volunteer program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Design (Cove Captains; HAB surveillance) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Expand Cove Captains program; retain and identify new Captains, provide training • Recruitment, training, retention, and recognition 3. Intern recruitment, mentoring, recognition, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College Relationships (e.g. CCC, ESF) • Mentoring, program quality assurance • Dissemination of results 	<p>PA</p> <p>IS</p> <p>IS</p> <p>OI</p> <p>C (2016)</p> <p>C (2016)</p> <p>OI</p> <p>PA</p> <p>IS</p> <p>IS</p> <p>IS</p>
3. Formalize key community partnerships	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish/nurture partnership agreements with: IAGT, Owasco Flats, Finger Lakes Institute, Water Quality Management Agency, CCSWCD, Watershed Inspection Program, Regional Watershed Alliance, OLW Management Council, etc. * (HABs, Notification Plan) 2. Nurture ongoing relationships with all local town, county legislators and policy makers, NYSDEC, state legislators, Congress, EPA, etc. * <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Establish legislative relations committee 3. Private associations, such as Sierra Club, Farmland Trust, Boy and Girl Scouts, NYSFOLA, Casowasco, FL Land Trust, Owasco Flats Nature Preserve, sportsman associations, Owasco Yacht Club, etc. * 4. Businesses 	<p>OI</p> <p>PA</p> <p>-</p> <p>PA</p> <p>-</p>
4. Technology Supports and Services	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Website development as needed 2. E-Mail List (currently member ties) that can accommodate all of the goals and objectives set by the Action Plan <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Purchase of OWLA laptop 3. Financial Software (for grant management) 	<p>IS</p> <p>OI</p> <p>C</p> <p>-</p>
5. Formalize Grant Management Plan	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fiscal Management Plan 2. Program Management Plan 3. Evaluation, Reports, and Continuous Quality Improvement 	<p>IS</p> <p>IS</p> <p>IS</p>

II. Communication and Education Events

Key Outcome Goals

- To continue to expand and enhance our current education, outreach and promotional events and activities designed to engage, inform, and educate the community that promotes positive changes and sustainable lake-friendly behavior.
- To develop new educational activities for school age children and youth
- To develop a stewardship education program for homeowners and farmers in the watershed
- To continue to develop an effective promotional campaign to increase awareness and personal responsibility (signs, awards, recognition)

Objectives	Activities	Status
6. Membership and Volunteer Recruitment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Annual Membership Campaign Increase membership Establish new membership categories and packages <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Individual Family Small business Corporation Member surveys Membership communications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Announcements and Updates Social media Letter writing campaigns to promote feedback for improved public policies 	PA OI I - - - - PA PA PA IS PA
7. Community Education and Awareness *	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Key Annual Events <ul style="list-style-type: none"> March to Lake Day Lake Day Bi-monthly Information Programs Social media Develop an educational program for schools <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Partner with: BOCES, SWCD, CCE, etc. to create curriculum, identify resources (e.g. additional funding sources) Encourage members, residents to “own responsibilities” while requesting others to implement water quality protection practices 	OI OI OI IS IS I - -
8. Outreach and Promotion of Activities, Information	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Press releases and media News articles Public speaking events <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a regular schedule (e.g. town meetings, yacht club, sportsman clubs, etc.) 	PA OI IS I
9. Brochures, Signage and Promotional Materials	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Lake Friendly Partners (Farmers) (e.g. Canandaigua recognizes beneficial practices) Entering Watershed Adopt a stream Signs Lake Steward Rules and Recommendations (10 Points) 	- I - I

III. Project Activities

- All project activities will build upon collaboration with our community based partners, funders, and designed to be based on fidelity to evidence-based scientific research; development of “citizen scientists”; and defined evaluation methods and documented, measurable outcomes.
- Each project developed should be calculated to make specific positive impact on an area of the watershed and quality of the lake; and meet specific criteria as a pilot that is expected to be able to scale up and be sustainable long term.
- Projects can be as small as building a fence to keep cattle from grazing in a stream to an entire stream-bed restoration project.

Ongoing Efforts

- Ongoing monitoring of sub watershed conditions

Objectives	Tasks, Projects, Activities	Status	Key Partners
10. Projects to reduce nutrients and sediment entering waterways (from farms, homeowners)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identification of major farms and pollution sources * <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Map manure spreading 2. Crop Cover/Stream Buffer Plant Programs 3. Farm Incentive Programs 4. Best management practices 5. Reduce fertilizers, pesticides 6. Create sediment reduction working group (similar to manure mgmt. group) 7. Work to institute legislative changes: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Increase agricultural tax exemption for riparian buffer zones b. Remove ag exemptions to articles 15/21 of conservation law 8. OL Enhanced Watershed Restoration Action Plan 9. Toyota DealerMatch award 	<p>I - PA - IS - I - - - N N</p>	CCSWCD Farmland Protection Area Farmers, CCE
11. Projects to improve lake areas/ streambank restoration projects	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adopt a Stream 2. Developing Lake Stewards to support monitoring 3. Reducing weed growth in lake areas * 4. Promote winter shoreline cleanup 	- I - -	
12. Projects to prevent and suppress invasive species	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Projects to educate citizens on proper prevention and suppression techniques 2. Citizen as Scientists Projects 	- -	Cooperative Extension, Towns, County
13. Homeowners implement best practices	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reduce fertilizer and pesticide use 	-	
14. Water Testing Monitoring	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Citizen as Scientists Projects <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. HAB surveillance b. Bacteria and nutrient monitoring 	IS IS IS	FLI, SWCD, CC Planning, CCDOH, OLWIP
15. Explore viability of legal actions fund		-	

IV. Fund Development

Objectives	Activities	Status
16. Recruitment of Sponsors for funding and donations of materials and supplies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Outreach to sponsors and donors 2. Fund Development to area businesses 	<p style="text-align: center;">I</p> <p style="text-align: center;">I</p>
17. Grant Development to support activities and projects	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review potential grants/funding sources <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Foundations (Chamber of Commerce) b. Grants.gov Introduction to local funders of OWLA's vision and mission 2. Explore grant writing options <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Consider hiring grants assistants 3. Establish grant solicitation committee 	<p style="text-align: center;">IS</p> <p style="text-align: center;">-</p> <p style="text-align: center;">-</p>
18. Donor and Major Giving	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish a donor program 2. Establish a land purchase program 3. Memorial and bequest program. 	<p style="text-align: center;">I</p> <p style="text-align: center;">I</p>
19. Collaboration Grants	See Infrastructure Goal to establish formal partnerships	
20. Promote/establish environmental bond	1. Generate financial resources	-

Figure 1. Consolidated Responses to 2016 Strategic Action Plan Update Question: What Should OWLA Achieve in 2016?

* Reiterates existing Strategic Action Plan tasks, projects, and activities

Potential Achievement
1. Expand cove captains program to increase membership and public education; Develop strategic planning around cove captain recruitment (identify and train captains; achieve goal of 1,000+ members) *
2. Conduct nutrient (phosphorus/nitrogen)/bacteria testing on problem streams, working upstream, to locate potential pollution sources; report with easily interpreted units, e.g. pounds
3. Seek out funding opportunities *
4. Increase public awareness of lake's health
5. Create formal OWLA communication strategy/plan
6. Complete and implement a notification/alert system (to inform versus alarm); identify current notification systems to determine if OWLA can leverage those systems/technologies
7. Improve communications and coordination with other watershed organizations conducting water sampling; develop a formal water sampling strategy/plan that identifies current initiatives by: who, what, where, when, why, and expected outcomes
8. Leverage strategic partnerships with watershed organizations to clean up Owasco Lake *
9. Create interactive education opportunities to bring people together to talk about the lake (e.g. park walks, kayak trips; clean up contests)
10. Continue education and outreach, focusing on: phosphorus, runoff, water quality/Owasco Lake ecosystem effects, ditches, farms, current practices, potential opportunities *
11. Establish committee to research current nationwide initiatives; what's being done elsewhere to address water quality issues
12. Reinstate weed harvesting in Owasco Lake
13. Follow progress of \$600,000 through to completion to get projects started
14. Purchase land in southern towns – hills and flats – to protect Owasco Inlet
15. Reach out to community/school groups (clubs, organizations) to coordinate educational programs/presentations given by OWLA members *
16. Coordinate with existing groups/programs to deliver formative educational opportunities; potentially create “traveling” presentation tools (primary/secondary schools, citizen science, Cornell Cooperative Extension, lake fairs
17. Create sediment reduction working group (similar to manure management group) *
18. Expand OWLA membership “upstream” to involve more streamside residents
19. Cultivate relationship with Governor Cuomo/Albany to ensure Owasco Lake priorities are recognized and remain a priority *
20. Find out what effect lake level has on condition of lake; work with City of Auburn about lake level and potential ice issues; lower lake level during winter months (as allowable with shore wells)

Potential Achievement
21. Work to institute legislative changes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Increase agricultural tax exemption for riparian buffer zones b. Remove agricultural exemptions to articles 15/21 of conservation law to potentially reduce sedimentation
22. Work with Auburn community to raise awareness of Owasco Lake as the source of their drinking water; potential framing as protection of human health, water treatment process and chemicals
23. Develop a cleanup program with community/school groups for public lake areas (e.g. pick up trash and lake vegetation)
24. Restructure OWLA meeting agendas to ensure more time for action items – e.g. can some tasks be covered quarterly versus monthly
25. Establish consistent newsletter publication and make printed copies available to the public throughout the watershed
26. Continue to address invasive species and eradicate where possible *
27. Draw regional and state attention to Owasco Lake as a beacon for water quality initiatives
28. Develop a warm water cleaning station for invasive species removal
29. Apply for funding under habitat restoration for aquatic species
30. Encourage action toward water quality improvements by developing positive language to talk about issues and potential actions (e.g. sustainability vs growth; interaction of systems)
31. Work with town highway departments on ditch maintenance (depths, preventing sedimentation, pesticide application, best practices)
32. Improve coordination with other watershed organizations to align resources/activities/actions *
33. Research current successful water quality initiatives used by adjacent watersheds and determine which can be leveraged by OWLA
34. Increase community involvement *
35. Establish relationship with Ag and Markets
36. Collect data from all tributaries/specific sites
37. Strive for new manure management (CAFO); implementation of new capabilities to determine nutrient levels; advocate with government agencies
38. Improve education and outreach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Owners: implement specific programs b. Stakeholders: own responsibilities; acquire more membership
39. Improve board knowledge of members' organizational affiliations
40. Establish legislative action (relations) committee

Potential Achievement
41. Increase public awareness of when, why, how, what, affects water quality; improve public notification and awareness of OWLA meetings
42. Develop an educational program for schools; partner with BOCES, SWCD, CCE, etc. to create curriculum, identify resources, etc. *
43. Focus on streambank stabilization to reduce erosion (e.g. hedge rows)
44. Explore viability of legal defense (actions) fund; leverage/traction through legal means if all else fails
45. Organize/reorganize OWLA to develop an organization that will continue regardless of who is leading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Paid CEO/Executive Director b. Sustainability/continuation plan
46. Promote/establish environmental bond to generate financial resources
47. Develop notification system to inform farmers, other residents, Ag and Markets, etc. of lake status (e.g. bacteria, nutrients, etc.)
48. Advocate for limits to number/size of dairy farms within Owasco Lake Watershed
49. Implement willow tree planting and other scientifically researched biofiltration methods to buffer and filter runoff; involve Cornell, ESF, other research institutions
50. Establish grant solicitation committee
51. Collect data from wells and septic fields
52. Push for sewage line extension; more stringent requirements for new systems (e.g. housing developments)
53. Establish more/increase business involvement (e.g. create business memberships)
54. Create a brand to improve OWLA's visibility (e.g. professional literature/speakers' bureau)
55. Support the Watershed Management Plan
56. Support annual weed harvesting program *
57. Develop timelines and performance measures for tracking accomplishments
58. Recruit board member with legal experience regarding environmental issues; also other targeted board capacity (e.g. accounting)
59. Advocate for Cayuga County/OL watershed septic system compliance within Tompkins, Cortland, Onondaga Counties

Appendix A: OWLA 2016 Strategic Planning Updates

Session 1: What should OWLA achieve in 2016?

Background

Saturday, December 5, 2015

Facilitators: Bob Brower, Kerry McElroy, and Ann Robson

OWLA Members Present:

James Beckwith, President	Ken Post, Board Member
Bob Brower, Vice President	Peter Rogers, Board Member
Jeff Trescot, Treasurer	Terry Lattimore, Board Member
Gilda Brower, Secretary	Sidney Beckwith
Rick Nelson, Board Member	Julie Lockwood
Ken Kudla, Board Member	Mickie Cuevas-Post
Ann Robson, Board Member	Linda Vitale
Lance Robson, Board Member	

The first session of the 2016 update to the Owasco Watershed Lake Association (OWLA) strategic plan was designed to elicit OWLA members' priorities for 2016 and beyond. Participants included all officers, most board members, and a sample of members who participate actively and regularly attend meetings. Bob Brower (Vice President) reached out to OWLA board members for their availability via email and phone, and also encouraged the board to invite other members. Three days prior to the session, board members were provided with background materials regarding a proposed watershed-wide public outreach and engagement strategy, and a 2015 update on current achievements toward the existing strategic plan.

The facilitation process was designed by Bob Brower, with comments and contributions from Ann Robson and Kerry McElroy, the session's additional facilitators. Together, the facilitators agreed the process should focus on one central question: **What should OWLA achieve in 2016?** Together, the facilitators sought to design a process that would encourage a broad range of responses and ideas, and provided an equitable means for participants to share the ideas generated (see ideas in Figure 1, pg. 10).

Process Implementation

The three facilitators and Jim Beckwith (President) arrived approximately one hour prior to the session's start to set up. Each breakout group space received an easel, large newsprint pad, and marker for notetaking. Colored-dot stickers to be used during the third portion of the session were counted out into piles to be distributed equally to participants (see Plenary Session Two). Name tags and markers were set out next to a sign-in sheet. As participants began to arrive, they milled about and spoke casually over provided coffee, water, and pastries prior to the session's start. Once seated, all of those present were able to fit around two rectangle-shaped tables.

Plenary Session One

The process was designed with an initial plenary welcome session, with all participants (13 plus 3 facilitators) together in one large group for approximately 20 minutes. The purposes of the first plenary session were to introduce members and facilitators to one another, and establish a shared understanding of the expectations and outcomes of the session. In other words, the rationale behind the process design was explained as context for the session's ground rule: *no challenges to ideas, questions are for only for clarification to ensure an idea was interpreted correctly*. Participants were encouraged to think creatively and freely about what OWLA should achieve in 2016.

Breakout Sessions

Breakout sessions followed the first plenary session. The larger group was broken into two smaller groups of 7 attendees, each (a 14th attendee joined the process at the beginning of the breakout sessions). Ann Robson facilitated group 1's discussion, Kerry McElroy facilitated group 2's discussion, and Bob Brower floated between the groups, which were located in separate rooms. Once participants were seated around the tables in each room (group 1, a rectangle table and group 2, a round table), facilitators repeated the question: What should OWLA achieve in 2016? Facilitators reiterated that all ideas are valuable, and encouraged participants to think broadly about their individual desires for OWLA's future achievements. Participants were then given 10 minutes to silently consider the question and write down ideas.

Following silent contemplation, participants were asked to share their ideas in a round robin manner, for up to one hour. Facilitators asked for a volunteer to start, and then moved counterclockwise around the table. Each participant was given ample time (up to two minutes) to verbalize and explain their idea. Facilitators recorded ideas in some degree of shorthand and confirmed they had captured that participant's intent. Clarifying questions were asked based on some ideas, but participants remained respectful of one another and the ground rule of no challenges. Once individual participants had no further ideas to share, they could pass and sharing continued counterclockwise around the table. At the end of the allotted hour, there was a 15 minute break.

Second Plenary Session

During the break, facilitators hung each group's note sheets (12 total) around the larger meeting room used during the first plenary session. At the start of the second plenary session, facilitators handed out colored-dot stickers to participants and explained the ranking system. The stickers were used to establish weighting among ideas toward identifying OWLA's priority achievements in 2016 and beyond. Participants each received two blue dots, worth 5-points each; two red dots, worth 2-points each, and three red dots, worth 1-point each.

Each group chose one representative to summarize the ideas generated during the breakout sessions. Where necessary or requested, representatives provided brief explanations of the intent behind each written idea. The summarization was primarily intended to inform the groups of one another's work to ensure all participants shared an understanding of each idea. After all responses were summarized, participants walked up to the note sheets to read through the generated ideas and stick their voting dots next to those ideas which they most believed OWLA should achieve.

Wrap-Up

After all voting dots were distributed on the note sheets, two facilitators jointly counted and recorded votes. Facilitators subsequently highlighted the ideas which received the most votes, and some minor discussion ensued about the implications and practicality of some of those ideas. Participants were thanked for their participation and assured the results would be shared again at future OWLA meetings. Facilitators cleaned up the materials used and retained note sheets for transcription (see Appendix B).

Session 2: Incorporating Updates

Background

Saturday, February 27, 2016

Facilitators: Bob Brower and Kerry McElroy

OWLA Members Present:

James Beckwith, President

Ann Robson, Board Member

Bob Brower, Vice President (President Elect)

Peter Rogers, Board Member

Gilda Brower, Secretary

Terry Lattimore, Board Member

Rick Nelson, Board Member

The second session to update the Owasco Watershed Lake Association (OWLA) strategic plan was designed to incorporate the priority ideas OWLA members generated during Session I into the existing Strategic Action Plan. Participants included most officers and some board members. Bob Brower (Vice President) reached out to OWLA board members for their availability via email and phone, and also encouraged the board to invite other members. One day prior to the session, board members were provided with the top 10 priorities generated during Session I, and the existing Strategic Action Plan.

Process Implementation

The facilitators and Jim Beckwith (President) arrived approximately one half hour prior to the session's start to set up. Materials provided to participants included printed copies of the Session I Top 10 priorities (Appendix B), existing Strategic Action Plan (Plan), and the most recent progress update to the Plan. As participants arrived, they conversed casually over provided coffee, water, and pastries prior to the session's start.

Plenary Session

Seven OWLA members and an additional facilitator were present for Session II. All participants fit around one large, rectangular table. Session II was designed as a single collaborative plenary session. The session began with a welcome and brief description of expectations and outcomes: *to update the OWLA Strategic Action Plan, including incorporation the top 10 priorities for what OWLA should achieve in 2016 identified during Session I.* Participants were encouraged to voice their opinion on the language and organization of information included in the existing Plan.

First, participants were provided with a hardcopy of the existing Plan. Together, the group read through the Plan one section at a time, making recommendations and adding, deleting, or rephrasing as agreed to by consensus of the group. No formal consensus rule was established, but during Session II agreement came easily with casual dialogue and no arguments.

Second, participants were provided with a blank hardcopy of the performance measurement tracking charts incorporated in the Plan, which include key objectives and tasks, activities, and events that support those objectives. Participants collaboratively read through the charts, again making recommendations and adding, deleting, or rephrasing as agreed to by consensus of the group.

Third, participants were provided with a hardcopy of the Plan's performance measure charts with the most recent progress updates. Together, participants added tasks, activities, and events currently undertaken by OWLA, not yet included within the charts. Where appropriate, participants updated progress toward all tasks, activities, and events using status codes (see pg. 6).

Lastly, participants were provided a hardcopy of the top 10 priorities generated from Session I (Appendix B). Participants collaboratively read each priority and determined its appropriate placement among the key objectives, as new tasks, activities, or events (starting pg. 6).

Wrap-Up

Following the last activity of the Plenary Session participants spoke briefly, expressing excitement and satisfaction about the achievements OWLA has made toward the Strategic Action Plan. Participants were thanked for their participation and assured the 2016 Plan would soon be updated to reflect the recommendations generated.

Appendix B: Transcription of Strategic Planning Session I Notes

Table 1. Summary of Ten Highest Point Values Assigned

Potential Achievement	Points Received
6. Establish legislative action (relations) committee	25
4. Improve education and outreach c. Owners: implement specific programs d. Stakeholders: own responsibilities; acquire more membership	20
11. Explore viability of legal defense (actions) fund; leverage/traction through legal means if all else fails	20
23. Work to institute legislative changes: c. Increase agricultural tax exemption for riparian buffer zones d. Remove agricultural exemptions to articles 15/21 of conservation law to potentially reduce sedimentation	18
13. Promote/establish environmental bond to generate financial resources	18
17. Establish grant solicitation committee	18
8. Develop strategic planning around cove captain recruitment a. Identify and train captains b. Achieve goal of 1,000+ members	17
1. Expand cove captains program; increase education and membership	16
10. Develop an educational program for schools; partner with BOCES, SWCD, CCE, etc. to create curriculum, identify resources, etc.	13
19. Create sediment reduction working group (similar to manure management group)	12
3. Strive for new manure management (CAFO); implementation of new capabilities to determine nutrient levels; advocate with government agencies	12

Table 2. Transcription in Original Order with Assigned Point Values

Potential Achievement	Points Received
1. Expand cove captains program; increase education and membership	16
2. Conduct nutrient/bacteria testing on problem streams, working upstream, to locate potential sources	5
3. Seek out funding opportunities	0
4. Increase public awareness of lake’s health	0
5. Create formal OWLA communication strategy/plan	7
6. Institute nutrient (phosphorus/nitrogen) testing in streams to identify those with highest concentrations; report with easily interpreted units, e.g. pounds	5
7. Complete and implement a notification/alert system (to inform versus alarm)	2
8. Improve communications and coordination with other watershed organizations conducting water sampling	2
9. Leverage strategic partnerships with watershed organizations to clean up Owasco Lake	4
10. Create interactive education opportunities to bring people together to talk about the lake (e.g. park walks, kayak trips; clean up contests)	1
11. Develop a formal water sampling strategy/plan that identifies current initiatives by: who, what, where, when, why, and expected outcomes	7
12. Continue education and outreach, focusing on: phosphorus, runoff, water quality/Owasco Lake ecosystem effects, ditches, farms, current practices, potential opportunities	2
13. Establish committee to research current nationwide initiatives; what’s being done elsewhere to address water quality issues	0
14. Reinstate weed harvesting in Owasco Lake	1
15. Follow progress of \$600,000 through to completion to get projects started	0
16. Purchase land in southern towns – hills and flats – to protect Owasco Inlet	5
17. Reach out to community/school groups (clubs, organizations) to coordinate educational programs/presentations given by OWLA members;	2
18. Create a suite of presentation materials/tools that can be delivered by various OWLA members to community/school clubs and groups	0

Potential Achievement	Points Received
19. Create sediment reduction working group (similar to manure management group)	12
20. Expand OWLA membership “upstream” to involve more streamside residents	2
21. Cultivate relationship with Governor Cuomo/Albany to ensure Owasco Lake priorities are recognized and remain a priority	0
22. Work with City of Auburn about spring lake level and potential ice issues	0
23. Work to institute legislative changes: e. Increase agricultural tax exemption for riparian buffer zones f. Remove agricultural exemptions to articles 15/21 of conservation law to potentially reduce sedimentation	18
24. Work with Auburn community to raise awareness of Owasco Lake as the source of their drinking water; potential framing as protection of human health, water treatment process and chemicals	8
25. Develop a cleanup program with community/school groups for public lake areas (e.g. pick up trash and lake vegetation)	0
26. Restructure OWLA meeting agendas to ensure more time for action items – e.g. can some tasks be covered quarterly versus monthly	3
27. Establish consistent newsletter publication and make printed copies available to the public throughout the watershed	0
28. Create a diagram of groups currently working within the watershed (e.g. identify responsibilities and accountability)	7
29. Lower lake level during winter months (as allowable with shore wells)	4
30. Continue to address invasive species and eradicate where possible	0
31. Coordinate with existing groups/programs to deliver formative educational opportunities; potentially create “traveling” presentation tools (primary/secondary schools, citizen science, Cornell Cooperative Extension, lake fairs)	0
32. Draw regional and state attention to Owasco Lake as a beacon for water quality initiatives	6
33. Develop a warm water cleaning station for invasive species removal	2
34. Apply for funding under habitat restoration for aquatic species	11
35. Encourage action toward water quality improvements by developing positive language to talk about issues and potential actions (e.g. sustainability vs growth; interaction of systems)	0

Potential Achievement	Points Received
36. Work with town highway departments on ditch maintenance (depths, preventing sedimentation, pesticide application, best practices)	0
37. Improve coordination with other watershed organizations to align resources/activities/actions	11
38. Identify current notification systems to determine if OWLA can leverage those systems/technologies	0
39. Research current successful water quality initiatives used by adjacent watersheds and determine which can be leveraged by OWLA	0
40. Increase community involvement	0
41. Establish relationship with Ag and Markets	11
42. Collect data from all tributaries/specific sites	0
43. Strive for new manure management (CAFO); implementation of new capabilities to determine nutrient levels; advocate with government agencies	12
44. Improve education and outreach e. Owners: implement specific programs f. Stakeholders: own responsibilities; acquire more membership	20
45. Improve board knowledge of members' organizational affiliations	0
46. Establish legislative action (relations) committee	25
47. Increase public awareness of when, why, how, what, affects water quality; improve public notification and awareness of OWLA meetings	0
48. Develop strategic planning around cove captain recruitment c. Identify and train captains d. Achieve goal of 1,000+ members	17
49. Develop an educational program for schools; partner with BOCES, SWCD, CCE, etc. to create curriculum, identify resources, etc.	13
50. Focus on streambank stabilization to reduce erosion (e.g. hedge rows)	1
51. Explore viability of legal defense (actions) fund; leverage/traction through legal means if all else fails	20
52. Organize/reorganize OWLA to develop an organization that will continue regardless of who is leading c. Paid CEO/Executive Director d. Sustainability/continuation plan	4

Potential Achievement	Points Received
53. Promote/establish environmental bond to generate financial resources	18
54. Develop notification system to inform farmers, other residents, Ag and Markets, etc. of lake status (e.g. bacteria, nutrients, etc.)	3
55. Advocate for limits to number/size of dairy farms within Owasco Lake Watershed	2
56. Implement willow tree planting and other scientifically researched biofiltration methods to buffer and filter runoff; involve Cornell, ESF, other research institutions	4
57. Establish grant solicitation committee	18
58. Find out what effect lake level has on condition of lake	7
59. Collect data from wells and septic fields	0
60. Push for sewage line extension; more stringent requirements for new systems (e.g. housing developments)	0
61. Targeted water testing (see #2)	3
62. Establish more/increase business involvement (e.g. create business memberships)	0
63. Create a brand to improve OWLA's visibility (e.g. professional literature/speakers' bureau)	0
64. Support the Watershed Management Plan	0
65. Support annual weed harvesting program	9
66. Develop timelines and performance measures for tracking accomplishments	9
67. Recruit board member with legal experience regarding environmental issues; also other targeted board capacity (e.g. accounting)	2
68. Advocate for Cayuga County/OL watershed septic system compliance within Tompkins, Cortland, Onondaga Counties	2