

Addendum to Sportfishing Restoration & Spending Plan for the Lake Ontario System

Executive Summary: DEC received \$12 million for Natural Resource Damages (NRD) in the Lake Ontario system from Occidental Chemical Corporation from 2006 to 2010. As of December 31, 2023, the Lake Ontario NRD sub-fund has accrued \$911,071.23 in interest. DEC has disbursed \$7,683,433.19 for 24 completed and 6 ongoing projects from the *Sportfishing Restoration & Spending Plan for the Lake Ontario System* (“2007 Plan”), and about \$1.2 million on administrative expenses, as of December 31, 2023. There is \$4,027,638.04 remaining in the NRD Lake Ontario sub-fund, as of December 31, 2023. The following report is in three sections. The first section describes the projects completed under the 2007 Plan. The second section describes DEC’s five-year spending plan to restore, replace, and acquire more opportunities for sportfishing in the Lake Ontario system with the remaining funds in the Lake Ontario NRD sub-fund by 2028. The final spending plan includes completing 6 projects from the 2007 Plan and 2 new projects. The final section describes DEC’s cancellation 12 of the 42 projects listed in the 2007 Plan.

Completed Projects

The following projects have been fully or partially completed using the Lake Ontario NRD funds as of December 31, 2023:

Improvements to the Salmon River Hatchery (2007 Plan, Project 1)

The Salmon River Hatchery provides most of the trout and salmon stocked into Lake Ontario by New York State, yet the hatchery’s water quantity and quality are inadequate to consistently rear trout and salmon at desired production levels. During the summer, rearing water temperatures are substantially warmer than desirable, resulting in frequent disease outbreaks. During winter, hatchery water temperatures are colder than desired, resulting in slower fish growth and additional disease issues. The hatchery uses well water in an attempt to buffer the effects of the sub-optimal temperature regime of its river water source, however, chronic shortages of well water persist. The Lake Ontario NRD fund supported the following projects to improve the water quantity and quality at the Salmon River Hatchery:

- Conducted hydrogeological resistivity study to locate groundwater resources
- Conducted well field maintenance survey
- Drilled additional wells
- Cleaned reservoir pipeline
- Rehabilitated older wells

Purchase Automated Fish Marking Trailer (2007 Plan, Project 2)

The AutoFish tagging trailer was purchased from Northwest Marine Technology in 2008. The acquisition of this technology has enabled the Bureau of Fisheries to mark (adipose fin clip and coded wire tag) every Chinook salmon stocked into Lake Ontario from 2008 to 2011, and conduct other trout and salmon (salmonid) marking studies annually since 2008. This purchase was a first for fisheries science in the Great Lakes Basin and provided the opportunity to gain knowledge of Lake Ontario fisheries that was previously impracticable.

Lindsey and Stony Creeks Angler Parking Areas, Jefferson County (2007 Plan, Project 3)

The five-car Stony Creek angler parking area on Jefferson County Rt. 152 and the six-car Lindsey Creek angler parking area on Jefferson County Rt. 87 were completed by DEC Region 6 Operations staff in Spring 2013.

Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation Lower Niagara River Access Trails at Artpark (2007 Plan, Project 4)

A Memorandum of Understanding with Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) was used to plan, administer, and execute four angler access projects in the Niagara

region. The projects were completed in Spring 2019. The projects were completed with support from OPRHP and New York Power Authority Greenway Fund.

Salmon River Streambank Stabilization and Trail Project (2007 Plan, Project 5)

The Salmon River Streambank Stabilization and Trail Project consists of a series of streambank stabilization and fish habitat improvement projects in the upper fly-fishing zone, Altmar and Ellis Cove. Trail improvements were completed in areas adjacent to the streambank stabilization structures. This project was completed in 2019.

Village of Lewiston Boat Launch, Niagara County (2007 Plan, Project 6)

This project was completed through a state assistance contract with the Village of Lewiston resulting in the replacement of the pre-existing two-lane boat launch and docks, and improvements to the fish cleaning station and restroom facilities. This project was completed in Winter 2010.

Golden's Marina Renovation, Jefferson County (2007 Plan, Project 7)

This project is located on Jefferson County Rt. 57 at "the Isthmus" and included construction of a new two-lane concrete boat launch, parking for 25 cars and trailers, and ten additional parking spaces. New dockage was installed, and a universally accessible fishing site was created. This project was completed in Spring 2015.

Boat Launch/Ice-fishing Access on Sandy Pond, Oswego County (2007 Plan, Project 8)

This project required acquisition of the former Groman Shores property on Sandy Pond. The parking lot was completed in October 2015, with the 20-foot-wide concrete launch installed in May of 2016. In September 2017 the Town of Sandy Creek entered into a formal agreement with DEC for snow plowing the access road and parking lot. The Town took ownership of the road leading to the launch from Route 3 (Stanley Drive) in March 2018. The new parking lot has a capacity of 20 truck/trailer vehicles as well as 24 single vehicles.

Chaumont Bay Boat Launch Sites and Ice-fishing Access, Jefferson County (2007 Plan, Project 9)

The former Bachys Marina in Three Mile Bay was acquired using Environmental Protection Funds and was developed into a boat launch/fishing access site featuring a single-lane boat launch with floating docks, parking for five cars and trailers, and parking for 10 cars for shoreline fishing access.

Sandy Creek Fishing Access Site, Monroe County (2007 Plan, Project 10)

This 50 car and trailer launch site was re-surfaced as described in the 2007 Plan. This project was completed in Spring 2009.

Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation Trails at Schoelkopf Ruins site (2007 Plan, Project 11)

This project goal for the Schoelkopf Ruins site was to provide safe angler access to the water's edge at two locations, one each north and south of the Maid of the Mist Landing. The northerly site required construction of steps down 25 vertical feet of steep slope, while the southerly site required construction of an at-grade trail across areas of rubble. This project was completed in Spring 2019.

Fisheries Promotion Assistance (2007 Plan, Project 12)

This project entailed a collaboration with the Lake Ontario Sport Fishing Promotion Council to design a new Great Lakes Fishing brochure. This project was completed in Summer 2020.

Enhance Fish Island Access Site at Dexter, Jefferson County (2007 Plan, Project 13)

This project was completed through a state assistance contract with the Village of Dexter. Improvements to this Black River access site included a new floating dock with a universally

accessible canoe and kayak launch, pathways, lighting, as well as picnic and pavilion area enhancements. This project was completed in Spring 2012.

Maxwell Creek Fishing Access Site, Wayne County (2007 Plan, Project 14)

Paving this 40-car gravel/dirt parking lot was completed in Fall 2012.

Town of Wilson Boat Launch, Niagara County (2007 Plan, Project 17)

This project was completed through a state assistance contract with the Town of Wilson, resulting in the replacement of a single lane boat launch and installation of new floating docks and erosion armoring. The new floating docks have improved overall use and enhanced universal accessibility. This project was completed in Summer 2010.

Boat Launch at Mud Bay, Jefferson County (2007 Plan, Project 18)

This new fishing access site was completed and features two gravel parking lots and a 20-foot-wide car-top boat launch. The upper parking lot (240-feet x 50-feet) accommodates approximately fourteen cars and trailers. The lower lot (100-feet x 200-feet) accommodates approximately ten cars and trailers. This site also provides public access to a popular walleye ice fishery in Mud Bay. This project was completed in Winter 2012.

Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation Fort Niagara Boat Launches (2007 Plan, Project 20)

Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation implemented this project including two new boat launch slabs, installation of seasonal floating docks, an ADA floating boarding pier (north launch) and an ADA floating fishing dock (south launch), as well as removal of concrete shoreline protection and replacement with stacked quarried stone blocks. The project was completed in Spring 2019.

Slater Creek Fishing Access Site, Monroe County (2007 Plan, Project 21)

The parking area at this site was reduced in size to better reflect typical site use, and the unused parking area was reclaimed to provide picnic/recreation space. This site now features a newly paved 40 car parking area and accessible fishing platform enhancements. This project was completed in Fall 2014.

Lake Ontario Watershed Display at the Aquarium of Niagara, Niagara County (2007 Plan, Project 22)

This project was implemented in partnership with the Aquarium of Niagara. The project created a Great Lakes Gallery, including three new living exhibits: a 10,000-gallon Lake Ontario/Lower Niagara River fish community tank, a 200-gallon tank housing juvenile lake sturgeon to highlight restoration/conservation efforts, and an 800-gallon invasive species tank used to educate the public on the ecological perils of nuisance aquatic invasive species (NAIS) and how to help stop the spread of NAIS. This project was completed in Winter 2017.

Irondequoit Creek Streambank Stabilization, Monroe County (2007 Plan, Project 25)

This project was executed through a state assistance contract with the County of Monroe, with assistance from the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The project enhanced fifteen sites: thirteen in Power Mills Park, and two in Ellison Park. Aquatic habitat restoration primarily entailed installing toe-wood structures in areas where bank erosion contributed to deteriorated aquatic habitat. Other restoration techniques included creation of rock v-weirs. Additionally, 1,000 native trees, shrubs, and perennials were planted to control erosion and provide shading. This project was completed in Fall 2019.

Deepwater Cisco Reintroduction in Lake Ontario (2007 Plan, Project 26)

This project was implemented in partnership with the Great Lakes Fishery Commission (GLFC), the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (OMNRF), US Geological Survey (USGS), and USFWS. Lake Michigan commercial fishers collected spawning bloaters for egg collections. These egg collections enabled extensive research leading to development of the first

techniques for culturing deep-water coregonines, the establishment of the first captive bloater brood stock, and the stocking of several hundred thousand juvenile bloater. This project was completed in Spring 2017.

Public Access Improvements, Village of Morristown, St. Lawrence County (2007 Plan, Project 27)

This project was completed through a state assistance contract with the Village of Morristown resulting in the replacement of the existing 2 lane boat launch and installation of new floating docks. This project was completed in Summer 2013.

Pen Rearing Program Assistance (2007 Plan, Project 29)

This project has enhanced Chinook salmon and steelhead sportfishing quality. Extensive studies made possible under 2007 Plan project 2 (Mass marking/tagging trailer) have documented that Chinook salmon reared in net pens survive approximately two-times better than traditional, direct-stocked fish. Additionally, evidence suggests that survival of steelhead reared in net pens may be increased over seven-times that of traditionally stocked fish. Sportfishing groups contributed substantial funding and volunteer time in pen construction and maintenance.

Salmon River Hatchery Aquaria/Interpretive Displays, Oswego County (2007 Plan, Project 30)

The Salmon River Hatchery hosts more public visitors annually than any other DEC facility. Defunct aquaria in the hatchery lobby have been replaced with a state-of-the-art aquarium system serving as the centerpiece of public displays at this facility.

Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation Four Mile Creek State Park (2007 Plan, Project 32)

This project involved the construction of a 5-space parking lot and an angler trail. This project was completed in Spring 2019.

Multi-frequency Acoustic Analysis for Estimating Alewife Abundance in Lake Ontario (2007 Plan, Project 33)

A Biosonics echo sounder (sonar device) used to estimate preyfish abundance in Lake Ontario has been acquired by the DEC Lake Ontario Fisheries Unit. This equipment employs state of the art technology that has improved the accuracy of Lake Ontario hydroacoustic preyfish surveys. This project was completed in Fall 2012.

Olcott Pier Access Improvements, Niagara County (2007 Plan, Project 34)

This project was implemented through a state assistance contract with the Town of Newfane. Improvements to this popular fishing pier at the mouth of 18 Mile Creek included the re-paving of the forty-car parking lot, paving the 700-foot access trail, re-surfacing a portion of the pier, and constructing a new, 17-foot by 9-foot, universally accessible restroom at the parking lot. This project was completed by Town of Newfane staff in Fall 2010.

Improvements to Cape Vincent Aquaria/Interpretive Displays (2007 Plan, Project 35)

New fish display placards highlighting life history descriptions for each of the fish species on display at the aquarium were developed, printed, and installed. The project was completed in 2017.

Locate Areas Where Lake Trout Spawn in the Lower Niagara River (2007 Plan, Project 37)

This project, a partnership between DEC and USFWS, required the purchase of acoustic telemetry tags and receivers to track the location of spawning lake trout. This project was completed in Spring 2015.

Sea Lamprey Control Barrier on Orwell Brook (2007 Plan, Project 39)

The Great Lakes Fishery Commission (GLFC) completed construction of a seasonally operated sea lamprey barrier and trap on Orwell Brook in Oswego County during Fall 2012. The barrier

was operational in Spring 2013 and has greatly reduced the need for chemical control of sea lampreys in the Orwell Brook system.

Spending Plan for 2024-2028

The following will use the remaining Lake Ontario NRD funds:

Improvements to the Salmon River Hatchery, Phase 2 (2007 Plan, Project 1)

The Salmon River Hatchery provides most of the trout and salmon stocked into Lake Ontario by New York State, yet the hatchery's water quantity and quality are inadequate to consistently rear trout and salmon at desired production levels. During the summer, rearing water temperatures are substantially warmer than desirable, resulting in frequent disease outbreaks. During winter, hatchery water temperatures are colder than desired, resulting in slower fish growth and additional disease issues. The hatchery uses well water to buffer the effects of the sub-optimal temperature regime of its river water source; however, chronic shortages of well water persist. Phase 2 improvements will include projects that improve the water infrastructure at the hatchery to increase quality and quantity of water available for fish rearing, such as:

- Additional well rehabilitation
- Purchase and installation of new pumps and monitoring/alarm equipment
- Construction of water degassing/oxygenation structures
- Additional drilling of wells
- Reservoir pipeline rehabilitation and additional reservoir pipeline cleaning

Purchase Automated Fish Marking Trailer, Phase 2 (2007 Plan, Project 2)

The AutoFish tagging trailer that was purchased from Northwest Marine Technology in 2008 has become outdated. Phase 2 of this project will update the computer hardware to continue gathering high quality data.

Chaumont Bay Boat Launch Sites and Ice Fishing Access, Phase 2, Jefferson County (2007 Plan, Project 9)

The former Bachys Marina in Three Mile Bay was acquired using Environmental Protection Funds and was developed into a boat launch/fishing access site featuring a single-lane boat launch with floating docks, parking for five cars and trailers, and parking for ten cars for shoreline fishing access. Because Region 6 Bureau of Fisheries staff have been unable to acquire additional property for ice fishing access, Phase 2 of this project will reallocate the remaining funds toward improving existing ice fishing access sites on Chaumont Bay.

Pen Rearing Program Assistance, Phase 2 (2007 Plan, Project 29)

The pen rearing program is being extended based on the success of the program to date, and the popularity of this program with the sportfishing community. Supporting additional net pen rearing projects will further enhance Chinook salmon and steelhead sportfishing quality. Sportfishing groups have contributed substantial funding and volunteer time in pen construction and maintenance. Funding for the Pen Rearing Program will continue through at least 2028.

Improvements to Cape Vincent Aquaria/Interpretive Displays, Phase 2 (2007 Plan, Project 35)

Phase 2 of this project will replace the water pumping and filtration system and develop and install new static displays.

Sandy Creek Climate Resilient Boat Launch, Monroe County (2007 Plan, Project 10)

The Sandy Creek fishing access site was damaged during flooding events that occurred in 2017 and 2019. Phase 2 of this project will repair flood damage, replace the fishing platform, and rebuild the boat launch site so it will be resilient to future extreme high and low water events.

Lake Ontario tributary habitat restoration (2007 Plan, Projects 5 and 25)

This project will be the next phase of Lake Ontario tributary habitat restoration to support Atlantic salmon restoration and expand fishing opportunities for this native species, and other salmon and trout, in Lake Ontario tributaries. This project will include additional streambank stabilization and fish habitat restoration work in the Salmon River and Irondequoit Creek, as well as in other Lake Ontario tributaries. The Salmon River, Little Salmon River, Irondequoit Creek, Oak Orchard Creek, Sandy Creek, and South Sandy Creek would be prioritized, but other tributaries may also be included. The six prioritized tributaries support major fisheries for Lake Ontario salmon and trout and have been identified for Atlantic salmon restoration in DEC's Lake Ontario Atlantic Salmon Fisheries Management Plan. Baseline fish habitat evaluations and specific project plans will be targeted for completion during 2024 and 2025. Restoration work may begin as soon as 2025.

Canceled Projects

The following projects from the 2007 Plan have been canceled, as explained below:

Port Bay (East) Fishing Access Site, Wayne County (2007 Plan, Project 15)

This project is being canceled due to ongoing issues with a breach in the barrier bar of Port Bay.

Northern Pike Spawning Marsh Rehabilitation (2007 Plan, Project 16)

Several wetland habitat restoration projects have already been completed in the St. Lawrence River and Eastern Lake Ontario by USFWS, SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, and Ducks Unlimited to enhance fish spawning and nursery habitat. This project is being canceled.

Hatchery Improvements at Cape Vincent Fisheries Station (2007 Plan, Project 19)

The repairs required at the Cape Vincent facility were initially underestimated; this project would require significant additional funding. Furthermore, rearing other species at the Cape Vincent facility would impose financial and administrative burdens on the Bureau of Fisheries for the foreseeable future. Walleye populations in Eastern Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River are relatively high and stable, and currently provide quality fisheries. This project is being canceled.

Repair Cranberry Creek Marsh Water Control Structure (2007 Plan, Project 23)

The goal of this project was to provide quality spawning habitat for northern pike in the Thousand Islands region. Due to unfavorable evaluations of juvenile pike production in managed spawning marshes, this project is being canceled.

Upgrade Hatchery Pond Complex at Lisbon, NY (2007 Plan, Project 24)

This project entails the construction and clay-lining of two additional one-acre ponds at a former DEC hatchery currently owned by OPRHP to increase production of walleye fingerlings for stocking into the St. Lawrence River. A series of logistic and administrative hurdles have delayed implementation, and the condition of the existing ponds has deteriorated. The New York Power Authority and USFWS have enhanced walleye spawning habitat in Brandy Brook and Little Sucker Brook, and walleye numbers in the lower Oswegatchie River spawning run have grown dramatically. This project is being canceled.

Sodus Bay boat launch, Wayne County (2007 Plan, Project 28)

This project is being canceled because the DEC Bureau of Fisheries staff have not been able to identify a suitable property with a willing seller.

Walleye Spawning Habitat Enhancement Fund (2007 Plan, Project 31)

This project was completed in 2022 using Great Lakes Restoration Initiative funds.

Additional ice-fishing access on Sodus and Blind Sodus Bays (2007 Plan, Project 36)

This project is being canceled because the DEC Bureau of Fisheries staff have not been able to identify a suitable property with a willing seller.

Port Bay (west) access road project (2007 Plan, Project 38)

After reviewing the project description and site conditions, DEC engineers determined that the scope and costs of this project far exceed the original budget. Additionally, there are significant regulatory hurdles that would make this project extremely difficult, if not impossible, to undertake. This project is being canceled.

Experimental Techniques to Enhance Submergent Vegetation Growth and Efficacy of Artificial Spawning Habitat (2007 Plan, Project 40)

This project is being canceled because it was deemed impracticable by SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry researchers.

Waterport Dam tailrace (2007 Plan, Project 41)

This project proposed reconfiguration of the dam tailrace and bypassed reach to alleviate fish stranding. During periods of high-water flow, water crests the dam and increases flow in the bypassed reach, attracting migrating fish into that reach. Once flows attenuate to normal operational levels, fish in the bypassed reach can become stranded. This project will not be completed using NRD Funds.

Construct walkways on any existing piers or breakwalls (2007 Plan, Project 42)

This project is being canceled because no viable project proposals were received.