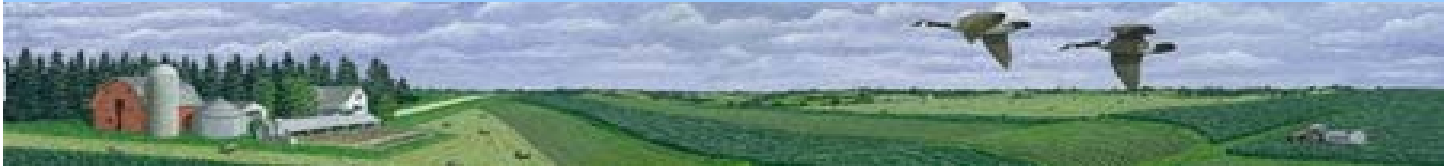


# OAK ORCHARD WATERSHED PROTECTION ALLIANCE



## OAK ORCHARD WATERSHED STATE OF THE BASIN REPORT

Newsletter No. 1

Date: April 14, 2005

### PROJECT INFORMATION

#### Oak Orchard Watershed Protection Alliance

The Oak Orchard Watershed Protection Alliance (Alliance) was formed to encourage participation and gather information from all of the stakeholders to help aid in the development of the "Oak Orchard Watershed State of the Basin Report". This multi-county effort is being sponsored by the Orleans and Genesee County Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

**Purpose and Project Description** - The Oak Orchard Watershed Protection Alliance was established in August of 2004 to guide the development of the State of the Basin Report for the Oak Orchard Watershed. The Alliance plans on examining natural resource issues at a watershed scale versus the village, town or county level. This watershed level planning effort is the first of its kind in Orleans County, while Genesee County Soil and Water Conservation District has recently completed two of these types of planning efforts (Black Creek Watershed and Oatka Creek Watershed State of the Basin Reports). Improved communications between private citizens, local municipalities, and county, state and federal government agencies within the watershed is a primary goal of the Alliance. Improved communications will allow for a more comprehensive understanding of the current water uses, future needs, and what can be done to enhance the resources within the watershed.

#### Purpose of the State of the Basin Report

This State of the Basin Report will be comprised of an evaluation of the Oak Orchard Watershed, which will:

- Characterize the watershed with regards to its unique features, such as its geographical setting, topography, geology, biology, land uses, and water quality
- Summarize existing scientific data
- Identify research needed to pinpoint water quality pollution sources
- Identify remediation strategies for existing problems and preventive strategies
- Identify resources of value within the watershed
- Identify existing problems and possible opportunities in the watershed

It is intended that the State of the Basin Report be followed by an Oak Orchard Watershed Plan that will propose methods for improving water quality in the watershed and to ensure its long-term health and the sustainability of its resources. The State-of-the-Basin Report will be the first chapter of an Oak Orchard Watershed plan.

**Inter-municipal Agreement** – The Alliance has worked with the County Legislatures in both Genesee and Orleans County on the development and signing of an Inter-municipal Agreement, which has been accomplished. The agreement recognizes the benefits and the need for cooperation from all stakeholders to achieve improved water quality in the Oak Orchard Watershed. We want to thank both County Legislatures for supporting this watershed planning effort and for signing the agreement.

**Funding** - Funding for the State of the Basin Report was made possible through a Finger Lakes - Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance (FL-LOWPA) Special Projects Fund grant. The Water Resources Board (governing body of FL-LOWPA) administers the competitive Special Projects Fund to encourage multi-county collaboration and watershed-based programming. We want to thank FL-LOWPA for making

the funds available to support this important watershed project. Many other organizations and individuals are also providing in-kind support for the developing of this project. A listing of the organizations participating in the development of the State of the Basin Report can be found on our website.

**Project Scope:** The Oak Orchard Watershed is one of the largest watersheds (173,975 acres) in New York State which directly discharges its contents into Lake Ontario. The Oak Orchard Watershed originates north of Batavia in Genesee County and flows north into Lake Ontario at Point Breeze in Orleans County. The Oak Orchard Watershed encompasses eight towns in Orleans County (including Albion, Barre, Carlton, Clarendon, Gaines, Kendall, Ridgeway, and Shelby) and the Villages of Albion and Medina. The Oak Orchard is the largest watershed in Orleans County and occupies roughly 46% of the county. In Genesee County, the watershed includes the towns of Alabama, Batavia, Byron, Oakfield and Elba and Villages of Elba and Oakfield and makes up 19% of the total acreage.



**The Oak Orchard watershed incorporates all or parts of the following Towns and Villages**

**Orleans County**

<b>Towns</b>	<b>Villages</b>
Albion	Albion
Barre	Medina
Carlton	
Clarendon	
Gaines	
Kendall	
Ridgeway	
Shelby	

**Genesee County**

<b>Towns</b>	<b>Village</b>
Alabama	Elba
Batavia	Oakfield
Byron	
Oakfield	
Elba	

**Benefits** - The watershed covers a large area, and provides a variety of uses and benefits to the community. The water resources provided by the Oak Orchard Watershed allow residents and visitors the ability to utilize water for recreation, economic benefit, and aesthetic enjoyment. The coordinated effort of all stakeholders within the watershed to identify those uses and benefits can only enhance the use and enjoyment for years to come. From the mouth of the river where the economy is driven by recreation, tourism and the sale of waterfront property, to electric power generation below two reservoirs, the ecologic value of wildlife refuges bordering both counties, and the agricultural benefits including the unique muck land soils, this watershed is vital to both Orleans and Genesee County. This State of the Basin Report is the first step in the development of a comprehensive watershed management plan. A watershed management plan will be vital, as development pressure increases, to manage and conserve the water resources that so many people depend on.

**Oak Orchard Watershed - Public Information Meeting**

The first Oak Orchard Watershed Public meeting was held at the Orleans County Fairgrounds in Knowlesville, on June 30, 2004. Approximately 40 people attended. This was the “kick off” to the watershed planning process. The public meeting was designed to introduce the concept and benefits of watershed planning and to share information about the Oak Orchard Watershed. Speakers presented information on the watershed planning process, a historic look at the watershed, an overview of water quality problems in the Great Lakes Basin, and current uses of Oak Orchard Creek. In addition, participants were asked to share their ideas about the problems and opportunities that exist in the watershed during an open public comment period. Participants who live and work in the Oak Orchard Watershed identified problems in the watershed, resources that should be preserved and persons, agencies and organizations that should be involved in preparation of a watershed plan.

**Selection of a Consultant** – The Alliance selected a State University of New York (SUNY) College of Brockport Team to help write the State of the Basin Report for the Oak Orchard Watershed. The SUNY Brockport Consultant Team (seven members) is made up of a talented and diverse group of educators with knowledge and experience in watershed hydrology, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), soil science, land use planning, aquatic ecology, water quality, and fish ecology. This Team of qualified individuals, along with the members of the Alliance and concerned citizens are striving for the completion of a very successful and informational State of the Basin Report by October of 2005.

**SUNY Brockport Consultant Team**

- James Zollweg, Ph.D. (project director) - Watershed hydrology, GIS, agriculture
- Whitney Autin, Ph.D- Soil science, land use planning
- Ted Lewis, M.S. - Aquatic ecology, water quality
- Mark Noll, Ph.D. - Geochemistry, hydrogeology
- Paul Richards, Ph.D. - Surface processes, GIS
- Scott Wells, B.S. - Fish ecology
- Carol Zollweg, M.S. - GIS, web page development

**Responsibilities**

The Consultant will be the primary entity for completing the State of the Basin Report. The Oak Orchard Watershed Protection Alliance will work with the Consultant to prepare a detailed workplan; help gather maps, reports, master plans, photographs and other available information; facilitate contacts with municipal officials and other information providers; identify problems in and threats to the watershed; determine format details of the report in advance of writing; and review completed work.

**Tasks and Time Table**

The following is a summary of the component tasks for this project and a generalized schedule that shows how these tasks will be completed by October 30, 2005.

- |    |  |                                  |
|----|--|----------------------------------|
| 1. | Execute Contract/Project Kickoff         | (January, 2005)                  |
| 2. | Prepare Detailed Methodology/Work Plan   | (February, 2005)                 |
| 3. | Interview, Inventory and Mapping         | (March , 2005 - September, 2005) |
| 4. | Prepare Draft Report for Internal Review | (June, 2005)                     |
| 5. | Prepare Final Report for Public Review   | (October, 2005)                  |

**Come Join Us**

We invite you to join the Oak Orchard Watershed Protection Alliance and participate in this watershed planning effort. Who should attend: Residents, businesses, farmers, environmental groups, conservation groups, municipal officials and staff and other citizens concerned with the water quality in the Oak Orchard Watershed. Each person has something to contribute and participation from everyone is welcome. We meet once a month. For current meeting Date, Time and Location contact:

- ☞ James Kingston, District Manager, Orleans County Soil and Water Conservation District  
446 West Avenue, Albion, New York 14411  
Telephone: (585) 589-5959, Fax: 585-589-7709, Email: james-kingston@ny.nacdnet.org
- ☞ George Squires, District Manager, Genesee County Soil and Water Conservation District  
Telephone: (585) 343-9167, Email: george-squires@ny.nacdnet.org

Visit Our Web Site at [http://www.lakeplainsrcd.org/web\\_OakOrchardWatershed/index.htm](http://www.lakeplainsrcd.org/web_OakOrchardWatershed/index.htm)

**Sponsoring Organizations:** The Orleans County Water Quality Coordinating Committee, Orleans County Soil and Water Conservation District, Genesee County Soil and Water Conservation District, the Lake Plains RC&D, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the Finger Lakes – Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance.

*An Important Thing to Remember as we begin this process: All too often, planning efforts fail to consult the ones most affected: landowners and other stakeholders.... If community concerns are truly validated from the beginning, with stakeholder participation in setting the goals and priorities, there is a much greater likelihood of success. 02/27/01 Coastal Conservancy*