

Seneca Lake
Pure Waters
Association

Strategic Plan 2021-2025

April 2021

Introduction

About Pure Waters

Seneca Lake Pure Waters Association is a Section 501(c)3 nonprofit corporation dedicated to protecting Seneca Lake Water Quality.

In 1990, Howard Kimball, Seneca Lake resident and local businessman, organized a group of people to establish an association to protect Seneca Lake's water quality. Seneca Lake Pure Waters Association was incorporated in 1991 with a start-up grant of \$70,000. The group hired an Executive Director, Mary Ruth Sweet, and agreed to partner with Hobart and William Smith Colleges which would serve as the research arm of the organization.

A member of the organizing group, Ed Hoffman, helped to obtain incorporation as a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization. A volunteer Board of Directors representing the various interests around the lake was formed.

From its inception, the association was determined not to go it alone and was successful in forming partnerships with SUNY Oneonta, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC), Open Spaces Trust, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Citizen's Statewide Lake Association Program (CSLAP) as well as other organizations.

Pure Waters' data collection efforts enabled it to inform the public on a number of issues including sources of contamination, treatment of invasive species, lake level concerns, and methods to remediate threats to lake water quality. Threats included non-source pollution, run-off from farms and individual septic systems, and road bank erosion. Several scientific studies were published including: reports on salinity levels and sources, limnology studies, hazardous waste sites, fracking, Liquid Petroleum Gas storage, recommended changes to municipal land use ordinances, mapping of Seneca Lake's 29 sub watersheds, recommendations for uniform onsite wastewater management, and an environmental risk survey.

Significant achievements were accomplished by 1999 a comprehensive summary assessment titled The State of the Seneca Lake Watershed was published and the Finger Lakes Institute (FLI) at Hobart and William Smith Colleges (HWS) was established.

After ten years of service, Pure Waters began to decline in membership and funding. A reorganization committee was formed led by Richard Ahola and with the assistance of Bob Barton, Jim Carter, Mary Anne Kowalski, Bruce Adams, Phil Cianciotto and others they implemented substantial changes to the organization's structure and finances. They eliminated all paid positions and all organizational and communication responsibilities were assumed by volunteer members of the board. The first annual dinner meeting was held in the fall 2009 and has continued every year since then.

Seneca Lake Pure Waters Association continues to study the quality of the lake and its tributaries in the watershed with the assistance of over 100 volunteers, funding from the Tripp Foundation and laboratory analysis by the Community Science Institute (CSI) based in Ithaca.

Additional projects, such as Shoreline Monitoring to identify cyanobacteria or harmful algae blooms and Lake Monitoring through the Citizen Science Lake Assessment Program (CSLAP) program have been added in an effort to compile a comprehensive all-encompassing water quality assessment.

In 2017, Pure Waters was instrumental in obtaining a state grant to update the Watershed Management Plan, which is also known as the 9 Element Plan, which will help the watershed compete for environmental funding. In addition, Pure Waters aided the Seneca Watershed Intermunicipal Organization (SWIO) obtaining a grant to hire a watershed steward to guide plan implementation.

Pure Waters Mission

Preserve, Protect and Promote Seneca Lake Water Quality

Pure Waters Vision

Pure Waters is the Premier Lake Association in the State

Strategic Plan Purpose

The Board of Directors had significant changes in 2018 and 2019. Previous efforts at strategic planning had stalled and the Board wanted to reenergize the effort. The feeling was that there were many opportunities that Pure Waters should take advantage of and that it is uniquely placed to help the Seneca Lake community make progress on improving water quality. During a regular plan review in late 2020, the Executive Committee determined that many of the 2018 plan objectives had been accomplished and that there were new areas Pure Waters should address. This 2021 Strategic Plan is the outcome of that update.

Strategic Approach

To accomplish the Pure Waters mission and vision, it utilizes a strategic approach that draws on three primary, interrelated components:

- Education
- Volunteerism and Citizen Science
- Partnerships

These components are underwritten by an efficient and well-resourced organization.



Seneca Lake PURE WATERS Association Strategic Approach



Primary Components

The educational effort aims to inform stakeholders about the lake, its challenges and what they can do to help. It also includes efforts to inform stakeholders on risk, such as when Harmful Algal Blooms are occurring or the presence of e-Coli. In addition, Pure Waters supports research into the lake ecology that informs the general scientific body of knowledge and specific community actions. Education takes many forms including, but not limited to: publications, newsletters, presentations, website content, social media and person-to-person encounters.

A Pure Waters strength is its volunteer force. In 2019 and 2020, nearly 200 volunteers spent approximately 3,400 hours participating in activities to help the cause. A major component of the volunteer effort is the pursuit of citizen science. There are not enough government or university researchers to gather the quantity of data required. Our large, local volunteer force is able to obtain information that otherwise would not be available to feed research and decision-making for leaders and individuals around the lake.

Our partners are often responsible for implementing needed improvements. Pure Waters sees its role as facilitating actions that otherwise might lag if each partner organization tries to go it alone. Pure Waters can be the glue that helps keep initiatives going when multiple partners are

needed to accomplish improvement objectives. Pure Waters collaborates with many types of partners including other lake organizations, multiple government and municipalities entities, educational organizations and other non-profits. Coordinated action in such a large watershed is critical if we are to make progress.

Each Pure Waters water quality program draws on elements of each component to accomplish its objectives. An example is the Harmful Algal Bloom shoreline monitoring program. At its core is a large volunteer force conducting visual monitoring and water sampling over an extended period of time. The program has extensive publications, a robust website, weekly newsletters, and educational forums to inform and alert the public. The program partners extensively with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, the Finger Lakes Institute (FLI), Hobart and William Smith Colleges, non-profit foundations and other lake associations such as the Canandaigua Lake Watershed Association among them.

Vision 2025

This plan builds on the previous 2018 version and is aimed at a 5-year time horizon. Some objectives are near term, while others will take years before bearing fruit. The plan is a living document and changes will be incorporated as the Board evaluates progress and as we learn more about our environment. Vision 2025 is a statement about where Pure Waters wants to be at the end of 2025.

Pure Waters has a compelling mission and a positive brand that allows us the opportunity to grow into many activities. In order to grow, the organization will need to generate more income, from more sources and more reliably than in the past.

By 2025, the Association should be able to employ an Executive Director and administrative support. The Board will be robust with a healthy blend of experience and new talent constantly coming on board. Water quality programs will continue to improve and provide impactful data and educational materials to the Seneca Lake community. Pure Waters will invest in projects that will proactively and measurably reduce nutrient loading to the lake in line with the Watershed Management Plan and with the coordination of our partners. It will be seen as the leading voice for Seneca Lake.

Tracking Progress

Active objectives will be reviewed every 4 months in September, January, and May. An annual performance review will occur in June to cover the completed fiscal year.

Strategic Goal 1: Grow and Strengthen the Pure Waters Organization

Pure Waters (via, board, committees, and administrative staff) must consistently and comprehensively accomplish its intended outcomes. In order to grow, the board and support structure must be continually aligned to meet the increasing demand.

Objective 1-1: Organizational structure is aligned with anticipated activities

Periodically evaluate organizational components to ensure they meet future management and operational needs.

- Robust top-level organization enabling effective strategic planning and execution
- Continue developing and strengthening the administrative support staff
- Annually review and revise the committee structure, and revise as necessary (including any required bylaw changes)
- Review and revise, as necessary, officer responsibilities
- Recruit volunteers from outside the Board for committee membership

Lead: Executive Committee

Support: Governance Committee, Nominating Committee

Timeframe: Annually, January-April

Objective 1-2: Actively manage board membership

Ongoing actions to recruit talented and energetic board members.

- Align skills to board, committee, and program needs
- Specifically target educational expertise to help formulate future educational programs
- Diverse geographical representation
- Diverse background and demographics
- Succession planning
- Manage the Awards (recognition) Program

Lead: Nominating Committee

Support: Executive Committee

Timeframe: Ongoing, with May-August board nomination window for elections

Objective 1-3: Ensure effective financial controls and conduct organizational performance evaluations

- Annually review financial processes and reporting

- Annual budget development and tracking
- In-year budget changes, when warranted
- Track strategic objectives status
- Assess program financial performance
- Lead annual report development
- Ensure administrative controls and compliance are followed (legal requirements and 501c3 status)

Lead: Finance Committee

Support: Executive Committee

Timeframe: Monthly spending and budget tracking; Annual budget review in June (end of fiscal year); budget development cycle January to May.

Strategic Goal 2: Increase Funding for the Organization

Establish a diverse, sustainable funding stream to support growing internal operations and expand program opportunities. Build on current revenue sources and add new funding opportunities.

Objective 2-1: Increase funds received from individuals

Individual members are the lifeblood of the organization. Increasing receipts from individuals has two strategies: 1) increase membership (mostly addressed in Objective 3-1) and 2) increasing giving per member. The new tiered giving framework has successfully increased individual giving over the last 18 months.

The traditional fundraising approach has three components:

- Membership drive (late spring)
- Annual appeal (calendar year end)
- Ongoing donations (outside those two windows)

The primary 2021 initiative is to recruit recurring contributors to collectively pledge over \$50,000 per year to provide a steady funding baseline.

Only a small percentage of lake homeowners are members. In 2021, we will start a new initiative to actively contact those homeowners to encourage membership.

Another initiative is to ensure donors are aware of and encouraged to apply for potential corporate or business matching opportunities to leverage their donations as well as those corporations which give a percentage of sales (such as Amazon Smile).

Lead: Fundraising and Membership Committee

Support: Executive Committee, Communications Committee

Timeframe: Ongoing (appeals as noted), new initiatives 2021 and 2022

Objective 2-2: Increase funds received from business

Business fundraising consists of three components:

- Memberships
- Sponsorships and advertising
- Direct donations

In order to address the components above, new planning will incorporate:

- A membership package to fit a variety of business needs
- Sponsorship opportunities for educational and fundraising events

- Advertising opportunities in newsletters, fliers/materials, and on our website
- Corporate desires, which may just be donations rather than membership donations

Lead: Fundraising and Membership Committee

Support: Communications Committee, Events Committee, All Board of Directors

Timeframe: Ongoing campaigns. New initiatives start in 2021.

Objective 2-3: Increase funds through fundraising events

Note: "Events" include online activities.

- Conduct a large annual fundraising dinner with sponsorships, in-kind donations, and advertising
- Conduct smaller regional events at local venues (consider fundraising events in Rochester)
- Partner with local businesses for a cut of the proceeds
- Links with Objective 4-3, partner with educational efforts to combine education and fundraising
- Fun events to help build membership (Links with Objective 3-1 and links with Objective 2-1)

Leads: Events Committee

Support: Communications Committee, Fundraising and Membership Committee, Water Quality Committee.

Timeframe: Annual planning and execution cycle tied to FY.

Objective 2-4: Identify and pursue water quality and educational grants

- Produce a list of potential perennial grants for typical projects Pure Waters pursues
- Collaborate with partners to pool resources and priorities (e.g., SWIO, SWCD)
- Evaluate grant list to determine likelihood of success and application deadline(s)
- Apply for grants that support priority projects and programs
- Ensure grant income is reflected in the budget

Lead: Association Director

Support: Water Quality Committee

Timeframe: Ongoing, each grant will be evaluated on its own merit

Strategic Goal 3: Increase Awareness About the Organization Through Marketing and Outreach

Help increase membership and improve awareness via communications and interaction with members and the public (e.g., social media, social events, CRM, newsletters, annual report).

- More community branding and recognition to drive program impact (e.g., leverage HAB expertise, more symposiums— show up, materials and posters)
- Expand educational activities and encourage lake-friendly activities among various stakeholder classes (e.g., homeowners, marinas, farmers, municipal parks & recreation, golf courses)

Objective 3-1: Develop and execute a Pure Waters marketing plan

- Target the various audiences to increase membership and donations (aligned with goal 2)
- Develop professional materials for roadshow opportunities and target opportunities
- Develop and train board members on the Pure Waters value proposition (“elevator and barbecue talks”), mission, vision, and what the brand stands for
- Identify forums for Pure Waters to participate and sponsor events
- Generate a topic list and potential speakers for our events
- Develop and execute a media plan
- Engagement with homeowners, realtors, marinas, etc. with materials
- Merchandize

Lead: Communications Committee

Support: Events Committee, Fundraising and Membership Committee, Water Quality Committee

Timeframe: 2020-winter 2022 to develop the plan; execution as elements are developed

Objective 3-2: Develop a robust communications structure

Build on advances of the last 2 years to develop and implement new processes to further improve social media, online presence, and traditional media

- Master event calendar online
- Facebook posts
- Twitter and YouTube Channel
- Instagram
- Website fresh and up to date
- Informative newsletters
- Increase media presence: radio, TV, newspapers

Develop and execute actions to generate interesting and relevant content on an ongoing basis.

- Articles
- Research
- Photos and videos

Lead: Communications Committee

Support: Association Director

Timeframe: Ongoing

Strategic Goal 4: Deliver Relevant and Varied Education Program Content to Stakeholders

Develop content and deliver using internal or partner delivery methods in a way to change behaviors in target stakeholder segments.

Objective 4-1: Implement a Lake-Friendly living program that can grow into many sectors

Partner with other Finger Lakes associations to develop and deliver educational programs aimed at sustainable behaviors.

- Residential (Started in fall 2019)

Potential future target audiences.

- Agricultural (consider expanding the Town of Geneva Lake-friendly Farm program)
- Wineries— webinars with wineries explaining good practices
- Municipal (park, highway, etc.)
- Future: Recreational, industrial, landscape and golf courses

For each sector provide a process for:

- Generating informational materials
- Proper and meaningful recognition
- Funding sources

Lead: Lake Friendly Living Program Director

Support: Water Quality Committee, Communications Committee

Timeframe: Ongoing

Objective 4-2: Develop a broad spectrum of informational resource tools

Provide information relevant to various stakeholder groups (e.g., lake residents, recreational users, watershed residents, businesses [including rentals], farmers).

- Lake-Friendly Living materials
- “What to do” resource list (FAQs for common issues such as how to report improper land use practices to the Department of Environmental Conservation)
- Harmful Algal Blooms
- Recreation in the watershed
- Fliers
- Videos
- Tabletop materials for events

Lead: Communications Committee

Support: Water Quality Committee and Water Quality Program Directors, Association Director

Timeframe: Ongoing

Objective 4-3: Develop and deliver water quality educational programs

Build management structure to plan and execute the education portfolio

- Potential target audiences include, but are not limited to:
 - Lake property owners (e.g., information on drawing water from the lake or macrophytes)
 - Watershed residents
 - Recreational users
 - Government officials and organizations
 - Businesses
 - Farmers (including vineyards)
- Examples of delivery options
 - Thematic sponsored online events and include partners such as FLI, SWIO, and SWCD’s as partners
 - In-person mixed social/educational events Small-scale social events with educational activities (online too)
 - Large educational events (e.g., HAB season)
 - Be at partner events (FLI, DEC, New York State Federations of Lake Associations (NYSFOLA), etc.)
 - Develop strategies to approach key watershed stakeholders such as farmers
 - Participate in farm-oriented events sponsored by our partners (e.g., SWCD)
- Long term:
 - Explore Primary and Secondary school classes
 - Explore partnering with STEM programs in local colleges
- Links with Objective 2-3 (fundraising events)

Lead: Water Quality Committee

Support: Water Quality Program Directors, Communications Committee, Events Committee

Timeframe: Water Quality Committee will take this task in fall 2021.

Objective 4-4: Engage political leaders to ensure they are aware of Seneca Lake issues

Develop and execute a plan to consistently engage with local, state and federal representatives whose districts include the Seneca Lake watershed. Engage and harmonize efforts with partners who also aim to collaborate with elected officials, such as other lake associations (including the Finger Lakes Regional Watershed Alliance [FLRWA]) and the Seneca Watershed Intermunicipal Organization (SWIO).

- Actively participate in FLRWA political education committee to take advantage of a regional approach
- Track government spending on Seneca Lake water quality issues.
- Educate the community, local municipalities, and elected officials about issues affecting water quality

Lead: Governance and Political Action Committee

Support: Executive Committee, Water Quality Committee, Communications Committee

Timeframe: Ongoing.

Strategic Goal 5: Partner and Collaborate with Other Organizations to Drive Water Quality Improvement Efforts

Strategically engage partners to take actions aligned with our mission. This goal integrates with goals 3, 4, and 6.

Objective 5-1: Identify key partners and aggressively engage them to facilitate improvement programs and projects

Key partners are government, quasi-governmental, academic, and non-profits including other lake associations. For example: the Department of Environmental Conservation (Finger Lakes Hub, Region 8, Fisheries), HWS/FLI, Seneca-Keuka Watershed 9E Project Team, County Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Cornell Cooperative Extension, FLLT, Seneca Lake Guardian, USGS, Sea Grant (NOAA), and more.

Pure Waters will assign liaisons to the partners and build a relationship with each to determine how best to work with them to achieve common goals.

Lead: Water Quality Committee

Timeframe: Ongoing

Objective 5-2: Provide direction and leadership as part of the 9 Element Plan Executive Committee

Continue efforts to finish the 9 Element Watershed Management Plan and help identify and obtain resources for the highest payoff projects. Partner with SWIO and other regional government entities to accomplish plan goals.

Lead: Water Quality Committee

Support: Executive Committee

Timeframe: Ongoing

Objective 5-3: Support the Seneca Watershed Intermunicipal Organization's long-term sustainability

- Utilize Pure Waters members to engage with municipalities to actively support SWIO
- Help municipalities and others understand the Watershed Manager funding model
- Support SWIO meetings and provide our information
- Partner in education, research, and remediation efforts
- Keep SWIO informed of Pure Waters activities and priorities

Lead: Water Quality Committee

Support: Board of Directors

Timeframe: Jan 2021 through Dec 2021 for initial municipality sign up, then ongoing

Objective 5-4: Establish a collaborative relationship with other lake associations

- Regular meetings with Canandaigua Lake Watershed Association (CLWA) and Keuka Lake Association (KLA) to coordinate program efforts and learn from their practices
- Look for potential cost savings by working together
- Actively participate in the FLRWA and NYSFOLA activities

Leads: Executive Committee

Support: Water Quality Committee, Selected Water Quality Program Directors and Board Members

Timeframe: Ongoing

Objective 5-5: Track and communicate water quality improvement activities in the watershed

Note: Much of this objective is being done by the SWIO Watershed Steward, who will share results.

- Research and document all water quality projects and grants in every county in the watershed and by other partners (e.g., FLLT)
- Maintain and publish a list of programs and projects that Pure Waters is leading or directly involved in
- Provide a consolidated map for public viewing (website) with information on and links to the projects
- Develop and publicize case studies on successful Pure Waters projects
- Provide a communication link for partner information materials, such as Soil and Water Conservation District newsletters, that involve water quality improvement actions

Lead: Water Quality Committee

Support: Association Director

Timeframe: Develop Pure Waters list by mid-2021. Map complete in 2021. Updates ongoing.

Objective 5-6: Focus on nonpoint pollution sources and stormwater control projects to control nutrient flow into the lake

Define a new Sediment and Nutrient Reduction Program that seeks opportunities to get involved in physical stormwater control projects. Pure Waters would contribute volunteer hours and share funding with other partners.

Lead: Water Quality Committee

Support: Executive Committee

Timeframe: Start in 2021. Complete program description by fall 2021. Annual process to prioritize activities.

Objective 5-7: Support PRISM efforts to control the spread of invasive species that threaten the lake and watershed's health

Initial focus has been on aquatic plants and the following activities:

- Boat launch monitors (determine where monitors make sense and pursue funding to get them)
- Macrophyte survey (rake toss) volunteers
- Equipment such as catch boxes and signs at launches
- Educational activities

Future efforts could expand to other invasive species types, for instance marine animals, terrestrial insects, or terrestrial plants.

Lead: Invasive Species Program Manager
Support: Water Quality Committee, PRISM (partner)
Timeframe: Ongoing

Strategic Goal 6: Optimize Water Quality Monitoring and Research Programs

Optimize the citizen science program portfolio.

- Track and communicate results
- Potentially address a fuller set of lake issues (e.g., contaminants of emerging concern)
- Support 9 Element Plan development and implementation data requirements
- Support research data requirements (especially HWS/FLI, but also CSI and others)

Consider multiple factors such as what Pure Waters can bring to the partner ecosystem (strengths), value (impact on areas such as safety, controlling invasives, drinking water quality, research, etc.), publicity, fundraising opportunities and cost.

Objective 6-1: Actively manage water quality programs to maximize impact and efficiency

Continually update water quality monitoring programs to provide information that is relevant and useful to threat assessment and water quality improvement efforts.

- Stream monitoring
- Harmful Algal Blooms
- CSLAP
- Invasive species
- Dock monitoring

Lead: Water Quality Committee
Support: Water Quality Program Directors, Finance Committee
Timeframe: Annual fiscal-year planning cycle

Objective 6-2: Develop and maintain a comprehensive list of threats to water quality

Assign a working group to develop an initial list of threats to water quality that impact how the community uses the lake. Use examples including drinking water, swimming, boating, fishing, wildlife watching, and aesthetics.

- The list should include threats from sources such as invasive species (aquatic and terrestrial), point and nonpoint nutrient sources, climate change, chemicals (e.g., road

salt, PFAS (Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances which are a group of chemicals), soil erosion, and others as appropriate.

- Monitor regulatory reports from activities such as water purveyors, wastewater treatment, industrial facilities, and SPDES (or other relevant) permits.
- Ensure the community is aware of issues identified in this objective.
- Partner with Canandaigua Lake Watershed Association to leverage their private water information program

Lead: Water Quality Committee

Support: Association Administrator, Potential Student Research Project

Timeframe: Summer 2021 to build the list, then annual update and review

Common Acronyms

SLPWA: Seneca Lake Pure Waters Association
CSLAP: Citizen's Statewide Lake Association Program
NYSFOLA: New York State Federations of Lake Associations
FLWRA: Finger Lakes Regional Watershed Alliance
CLWA: Canandaigua Lake Watershed Association
KLA: Keuka Lake Association
PRISM: Partnerships for Regional Invasive Species Management
SWIO: Seneca Watershed Intermunicipal Organization
CCE: Cornell Cooperative Extension
SWCD: Soil and Water Conservation District
SWIO: Seneca Watershed Intermunicipal Organization
SPDES: State Pollutant Discharge Elimination System