

LAKE WATCH

FALL 2025

THE NEWSLETTER OF SENECA LAKE PURE WATER ASSOCIATION

IN THIS ISSUE

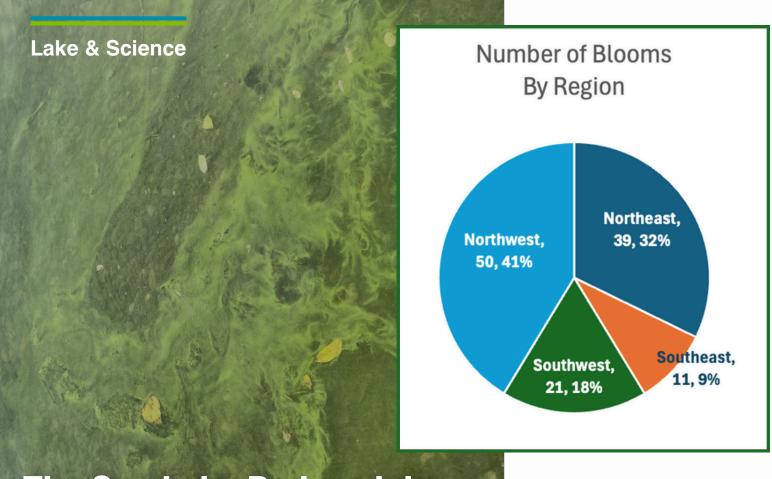
The Good, the Bad, and the Green: This year's HABs

Flow & Phosphorus: How SNPR and Stream Flow keep the lake clean

Protecting Our Hemlocks: Treatments, mapping, and a three-year plan

Farm Fresh Spotlight: LaBarr Farms: Flowers, family, and lake views

And more!!



The Good, the Bad, and the Green: HABs This Season

The 2025 HAB season on Seneca Lake was less severe than last year, but harmful algal blooms were still present across the lake this summer.

The Cyanobacteria Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB) season is not necessarily over, but the worst is certainly behind us. The good news is that this year's blooms were not as intense as last year. The bad news is that HABs continue to appear across the Finger Lakes, including Seneca Lake.

Counting Blooms

Pure Waters, along with the NYS DEC, monitors blooms one day at a time. Multiple reports in a single zone on the same day are counted as one confirmed bloom, with others labeled as duplicates. Seneca Lake is divided into roughly 80 zones, monitored by nearly 100 dedicated volunteers.

Results

As of October 12th, 2025, we confirmed 121 bloom reports since July. This is similar to 2019, which held the previous record of 130 confirmed bloom reports before last year's extreme season of 336.

It's worth noting that nearly half of this year's reports came from just three dates: July 28 (28 reports), September 23 (10), and September 24 (17).

Between July 31 and September 7, only four days had confirmed blooms (nine total), compared to a heavy bloom period in August last year. Factors like wind and weather may play a role, though bloom timing is always unpredictable.

Out of the 84 days from July 21 through October 12, there were 38 days with at least one confirmed bloom. Only eight of those days had five or more confirmed reports. For a lake the size of Seneca, one or two blooms per day is relatively few.

121 blooms reported on Seneca Lake this season.
Nearly 100 volunteers helped track them.

Lake & Science

What the Blooms Looked Like

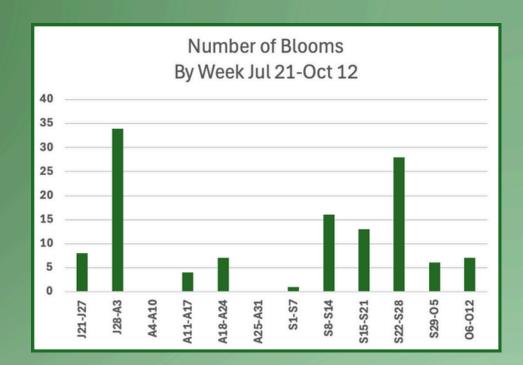
Volunteers reported on the size, appearance, and intensity of blooms. The Northwest region saw 70% small, localized blooms, whereas other regions were roughly 50-50 between small and large. Overall, 50% of blooms were small, 40% large, and 10% widespread.

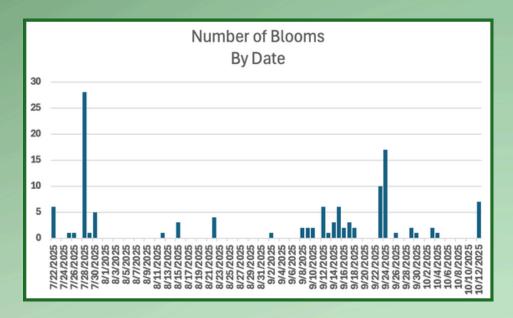
Most blooms were described as "streaks" or "spilled paint," with about 15% appearing as "dots." The majority were bright green. Intensity estimates were evenly distributed between low (<25% coverage), medium (25–50%), and high (>50%).

Three graphs illustrate the data: blooms by region on the previous page (page 2), and total blooms and blooms by date on this page (page 3).

Next Steps

A few HAB samples were collected this summer for analysis by the Finger Lakes Institute, measuring chlorophyll A and toxin levels. Some of these samples are correlated with our Nearshore Nutrient Project. Once



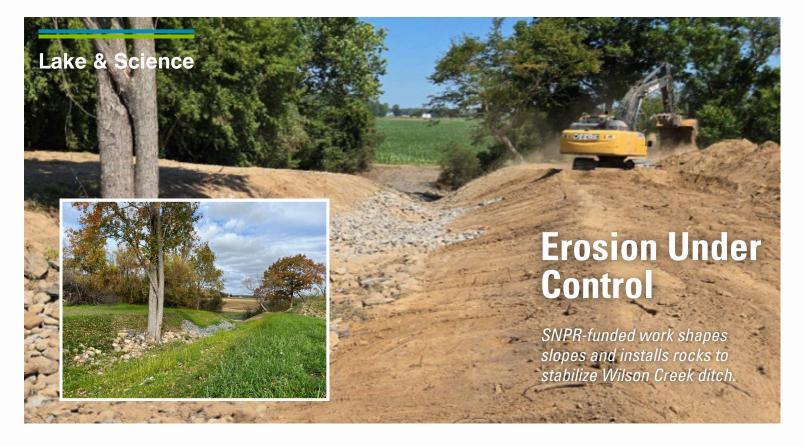


results are available, we will share them with the community so everyone can stay informed about HAB trends on Seneca Lake.

While monitoring continues, there are several ways you can help protect the lake and reduce conditions that encourage HABs. Simple actions at home—like using phosphorus-free fertilizer, maintaining your septic system, minimizing stormwater runoff, properly disposing of chemicals, and planting native shrubs and trees—can make a difference. You can also report blooms you observe, support volunteer monitoring, and share lake-friendly practices with neighbors. Every action helps maintain a healthier lake for people, pets, and wildlife.

A Big Thank You

None of this monitoring would be possible without the nearly 100 volunteers who dedicate their time to observing and reporting blooms along Seneca Lake's shoreline. We owe them a huge THANK YOU for helping protect our lake!



Hurricane Debby's heavy rains highlighted the urgent need to stabilize Wilson Creek ditch and protect Seneca Lake from erosion and nutrient runoff.

In August 2024, Hurricane Debby swept across the Finger Lakes Region, with precipitation rates exceeding 2 inches per hour reported in counties surrounding Seneca Lake. The intense rainfall caused significant damage to several hundred feet of a ditch that captures and drains runoff from adjacent agricultural land to Wilson Creek, ultimately discharging into Seneca Lake in the town of Geneva.

The Wilson Creek Sub-watershed was previously identified as a significant source of phosphorus to Seneca Lake in the August 2022 report, "Seneca Keuka Watershed Nine Element Plan for Phosphorus" (funded by the New York State Department of State under Title 11 of the Environmental Protection Fund). The report noted that this area was a priority for implementing best management practices (BMPs) to reduce nutrient loading.

In 2024, the Ontario County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) reached out to Pure Waters requesting matching funds to stabilize the ditch and reduce solids and nutrient loading to the lake. The Ontario SWCD proposed constructing two rock grade control structures to reduce surface water velocities,

stabilize the drainage channel, and prevent further incising of the channel bed. The project also included grading and vegetating the banks to minimize future erosion. Once implemented, the project was expected to reduce annual sediment loading to Wilson Creek by 180 tons, phosphorus by 180 lbs., and nitrogen by 360 lbs.

In September 2024, Pure Waters, through our Sediment Nutrient Reduction Pollution (SNPR) Program, awarded funding to the Ontario SWCD to support the project. Construction began shortly thereafter, with side slopes shaped and rock structures installed, and the project was successfully completed in July 2025.

"This project demonstrates how targeted efforts can reduce erosion and keep sediment and nutrients from reaching Seneca Lake," said Stu Messur, Chair of the SNPR Program.

This project highlights how collaboration between Pure Waters and local partners can make a real difference in protecting Seneca Lake. By supporting initiatives like the Wilson Creek ditch stabilization, we can reduce nutrient and sediment runoff, improve water quality, and safeguard the lake for future generations. To learn more about SNPR projects or to get involved in protecting Seneca Lake, visit **senecalake.org** and find out how you can make an impact.

Lake & Science

Pure Waters Educates on Invasive Species with Summer Boat Launch Blitz

The Invasive Species Committee kicked off the summer during New York State Invasive Species Awareness Week, June 9–15, with an educational table at the Finger Lakes Visitors Center in Geneva, NY. Partnering with Finger Lakes Institute (FLI) lake stewards and support from our Hobart and William Smith intern, we connected with walkers, runners, cyclists, dogwalkers, and farmers market visitors at the north end of Seneca Lake.

We followed up with a Boat Launch Blitz weekend on July 12–13 at Lodi and Sampson State Parks and Severne boat launch. Volunteers reminded boaters, personal watercraft operators, kayakers, paddleboarders, and park visitors about the



importance of cleaning, draining, drying, and properly disposing of fishing bait to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species.

Funding from the Great Lakes Commission supports this vital outreach, and the many volunteers who generously donate their time make these efforts possible. Thank you to everyone who helped make this summer's Invasive Species Awareness activities a success!



What's Happening Near the Shore? Cladophora and Nutrient Trends

This summer, Pure Waters and the Finger Lakes Institute (FLI) studied how nearshore phosphorus may influence Cladophora growth and harmful algal blooms (HABs). Weekly sampling at six northern basin docks and aboard the William Scandling, combined with monthly vegetation surveys, buoy monitoring, lab experiments, and volunteer reports, provided early insights. Aquatic vegetation was scarce, nearshore phosphorus remained steady, and Cladophora was concentrated in the northwest, with a second growth period into September—October. Full results will be shared at the FLI Water Quality Conference this winter. Thanks to the students and volunteers who made this research possible.

Lake & Science

FROM STREAM TO LAKES

Phosphorus is a known driver of harmful algal blooms, and tracking how it moves into Seneca Lake is key to protecting its waters.

This spring, we launched the Stream Flow Project to better understand how much phosphorus enters the lake. According to the DEC-approved Nine Element Plan for Phosphorus Reduction, roughly 235,000 pounds of phosphorus flow into the lake annually from both point sources, like wastewater treatment plants, and non-point sources, such as agricultural runoff.

Calculating stream flow begins with manual measurements. A flow meter records the speed of moving water, while measuring the depth and width of the stream provides the cross-sectional area. Multiplying the velocity by the area gives the total volume in cubic feet per second. By taking 10 to 15 measurements at different water heights, a water height versus volume graph is created, which allows approximation of flow at any water level. HOBO pressure sensors installed in the streams continuously record water height every hour, allowing calculation of hourly and daily flow in gallons.

Pure Waters is currently measuring flow and phosphorus in Big Stream, Kashong, Wilson, Castle, Reeder, Kendaia, Mill, Breakneck, Hector Falls, and Glen Eldridge, while USGS gauges provide additional flow data for Keuka Outlet and Catharine Creek.

"In a single hour, a storm can deliver more phosphorus into Seneca Lake than most people realize." — Mark Petzold, VP of Seneca Lake Pure Waters

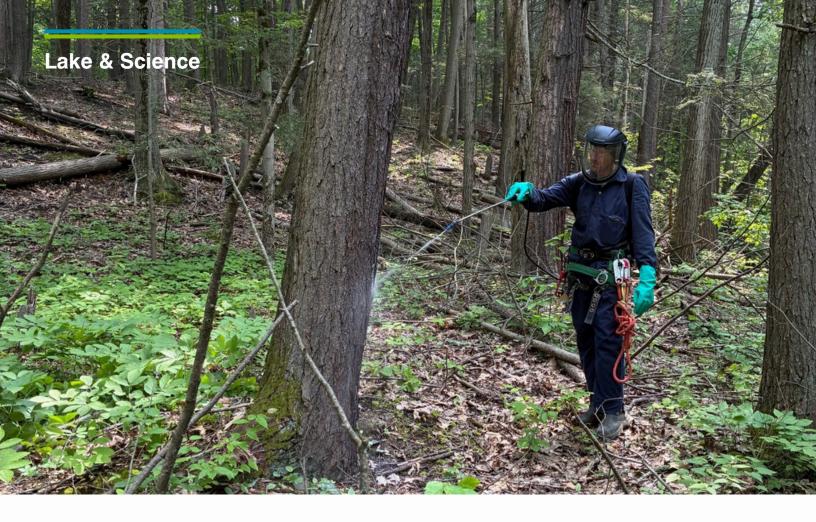
On June 10th, heavy rainfall turned the southern end of the lake brown. At 8:30 a.m., Big Stream was measured at 1,111 cubic feet per second flowing past the bridge, and the sensor recorded 5 feet of water, roughly 4,500 cubic feet per second, or 120 million gallons of water per hour. Using the average total phosphorus concentration of 122 μ g/L measured during past storm events, this means approximately 120 pounds of phosphorus entered the lake in just one hour.

The Stream Flow Project continues to provide critical data to understand how phosphorus moves through the watershed and to guide strategies that keep Seneca Lake clean and healthy.









Protecting Our Hemlocks

This summer was an exciting one for our hemlock project. We kicked off our first treatment at Curry Creek, applied for a treatment grant from the NYS DEC, and completed our Seneca Lake Landscape Management Plan for Hemlocks, developed by forestry expert Zeb Strickland. We shared an overview of the plan's key elements at the Annual Meeting on September 18, at Hazlitt's 1852 Vineyards. The plan highlights why Eastern Hemlocks are so important, the threat posed by Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA), the treatment methods we can use—including insecticides and biocontrols—how we plan to engage landowners, and a three-year roadmap for action. It also includes a priority system to identify the trees most in need of treatment, balancing urgency and cost.

While we didn't receive the \$40,000 NYS DEC grant, the Rose Foundation has generously stepped in to fund continued HWA treatments. This fall, our focus is on treating roughly 800 of the highest-priority trees across six key hemlock habitats in the ravines at Big Stream, Sawmill Creek, Excelsior Glen, Glen Eldridge, Plum Point, and Breakneck Creek. Treatments will take place in October and November, when trees are actively drawing water for new growth.

Our treatment partner, CC Environment & Planning of Batavia, NY, brings expertise in environmental planning and natural resource management. Zeb Strickland joined CC Environment in August as their Field Ecologist. Treatments are applied carefully to avoid overspray, including direct injection at the base of trees located within 10 feet of streams.

We are reaching out to landowners in the priority areas and are thrilled to add this method to our toolkit for protecting Seneca Lake and its watershed. Every tree we treat is a step toward healthier forests and a stronger lake ecosystem.

Above: Zeb Strickland applying treatment to 30 hemlock trees in Hector in August. Each tree was carefully treated at the base with a mix of fast-acting and long-lasting insecticides to protect against HWA while keeping chemicals safely away from nearby water.

By Jim McGinnis, Pure Waters Board Member and HWA Project Coordinator



In May, we co-hosted its first-ever hybrid Water Quality Symposium with the Seneca Watershed Intermunicipal Organization (SWIO) on the campus of Hobart and William Smith Colleges. The event brought together experts, community members, and lake enthusiasts to share the latest research on lake health, harmful algal blooms, and water quality improvements across the Finger Lakes. About 100 attendees joined in person, with even more participating via live stream.

Presentations highlighted key projects and research initiatives. Ian Smith, Seneca Watershed Steward, shared updates on the Marsh Creek Floodplain Restoration Project, a 22-acre parcel being developed for water quality improvement, recreation, and environmental education. Lexie Davis, Great Lakes Water Resources Scientist, discussed Harmful Algal Blooms: What They Are and What We Know, including their causes, impacts, and New York State monitoring efforts.

The third presentation explored emerging research connecting HABs, foam, and PFAS transport in the Finger Lakes, presented by Richard Smith and Stella Woodward, Scientific Consultants with Global Aquatic Research LLC. Attendees were encouraged to report foam sightings and participate in ongoing stewardship efforts to protect Seneca Lake. The symposium successfully combined scientific insight, practical strategies, and community engagement in one interactive event.

Top and bottom right: an attendee takes notes during presentations at the symposium, and Stella Woodward provides insights on foam and its connection to HABs and PFAS in the Finger Lakes.

Community

Future Lake Stewards in Action

Engaging local students through hands-on experiences to protect Seneca Lake.

Over 130 6th graders from Dundee and Penn Yan participated in the 58th **Annual Yates County Conservation Field Day,** held in September. In collaboration with the Canandaigua Lake Watershed Association, students learned about aquatic invasive species and how to protect local lakes through "Clean, Drain, Dry" practices. Hands-on activities included inspecting boats and exploring invasive species firsthand. Thanks to Yates County Soil and Water Conservation District and Cornell Cooperative Extension of Yates County for hosting this educational experience.

In July, future lake stewards took part in the "Libraries Love Lakes" event at the Geneva Public Library, led by our summer intern, Jackson Abreu. Children enjoyed stories, crafts, and interactive activities focused on lake stewardship and protecting aquatic life.



K-12 Education Programs

Seneca Lake Pure Waters Association's K-12 program connects students with the science and stewardship of Seneca Lake. Classroom and community-based programs are designed to inspire curiosity, responsibility, and a lifelong connection to clean water and healthy ecosystems.

Learn more!

People

2025 Annual Meeting & Volunteer Recognition

On Thursday, September 11, we held our Annual Meeting and Volunteer Recognition at The Oasis @ Hazlitt 1852 Vineyards. The event celebrated our dedicated volunteers, shared updates on lake protection efforts, and brought together community members committed to the health of Seneca Lake.

Volunteers were honored for their leadership, long-term service, and impact across Pure Waters programs.
Attendees heard inspiring stories of commitment, recognized individuals who have gone above and beyond, and learned how community engagement drives meaningful conservation outcomes.

Presentations highlighted several initiatives, including Protecting Hemlocks, showcasing efforts by Hemlock Hunters and partners to safeguard trees that stabilize streambanks and protect water quality; Stream Flow Monitoring, which tracks nutrient and sediment inputs, measures phosphorus reduction, and identifies highimpact conservation areas; and the Nearshore Dock Program, providing insights from shoreline sampling on nutrients and algae fueling harmful algal blooms. Additional updates covered ongoing community projects and opportunities for volunteers to get involved in upcoming stewardship efforts.





Thank You Volunteers!

These awards honor the volunteers whose time, energy, and leadership keep our programs strong and our mission moving forward. Their work helps ensure a cleaner, healthier Seneca Lake.



From left to right: Don Kloeber, Mimi Gridley, Sue Martin, and Jill Ritter.

Meet This Year's Honorees!

Mimi Gridley & Sue Martin

Mary Rose Memorial Volunteer of the Year

Don Kloeber

Friend of Seneca Founders Award

Jill Ritter

Rich Adams Memorial President's Award

People

Welcome New Board Members!

We're all about keeping Seneca Lake healthy and thriving. Through science, hands-on volunteer work, and community education, we make sure the lake stays clean, the ecosystem stays vibrant, and the communities around it can enjoy it for years to come.

Meet two new faces bringing their passion and expertise to Seneca Lake Pure Waters.

John Kirk (pictured top) is a semiretired Principal Broker with over 20 years in real estate and a former middle school math and science teacher. A Geneva resident for four years, John brings strong communication and outreach skills to Pure Waters' Membership and Fundraising Committee.

Erik Olsen (pictured bottom) recently retired from a distinguished career in the wine industry, holding senior leadership roles at Bonterra Organic Estates, Constellation Brands, and Chateau Ste. Michelle. A Seneca Lake homeowner for three years, Erik contributes to HABs and stream monitoring programs and brings expertise in science, agriculture, nonprofit finance, and fundraising.

Each of them brings experience and a shared commitment to protecting Seneca Lake.





"We are pleased to welcome
Erik and John to our board. We
appreciate their enthusiasm for
the lake and their willingness
to apply their valuable time and
energy to our mission."

-President Bill Roege

Join our team of volunteers!

Honor someone special—or just give back—while protecting our lake for future generations.

Join the Organizational Development Committee

- Match volunteers with meaningful roles
- Recruit and onboard new Board members
- Guide leadership succession and officer nominations
- Maintain policies and committee rosters
- Lead the annual awards and recognition process
- Collaborate with staff and other volunteers to make an impact

Commitment:

- Monthly virtual meetings (45–90 minutes)
- Occasional tasks between meetings
- Experience helpful but passion matters most

Other Opportunities

Citizen science, outreach, operations—there's a role for everyone!

Learn more:

https://senecalake.org/volunte er-opportunities/

News & Notes

Seneca Lake Summer Soirée

On July 23, over 100 friends of Seneca Lake joined us at the Watkins Glen Harbor Hotel for an unforgettable evening of food, dancing to **The Decades Band**, and celebrating Seneca Lake.

Thanks to our generous event sponsors:

- C.S. Burrall & Son Inc.
- Vance Metal Fabricators, Inc.
- del Lago Resort & Casino
- Seneca Storm Water Solutions, LLC.

Thanks to our generous wine sponsors:

- Fox Run Vineyards
- Glenora Wine Cellars
- Hazlitt 1852 Vineyards
- Ravines Wine Cellars
- Seneca Lake Wine Trail
- Wagner Vineyards

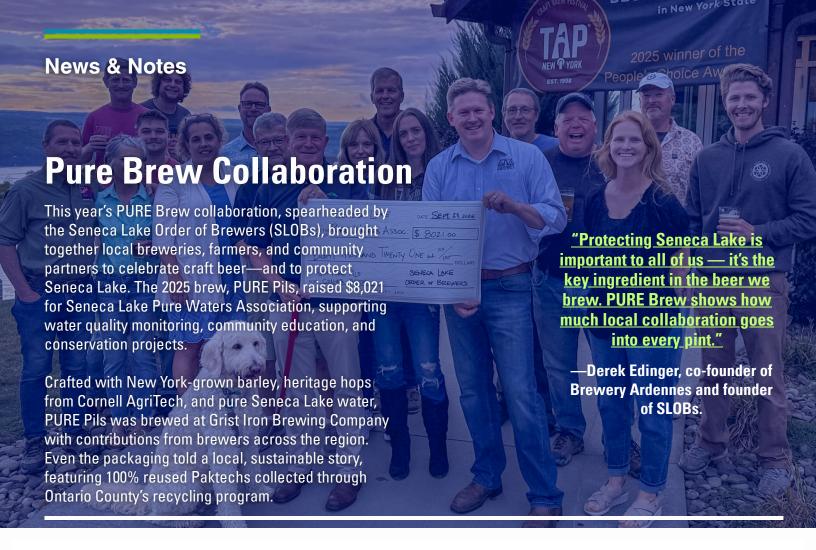
Our hybrid auction at the Soirée was a huge success, raising \$8,352 for Seneca Lake Pure Waters! With 275 bids, some of the most popular items included a Geological Map of Seneca Lake, a fishing charter with Roy's Boys, Pilates packages at Vault Pilates, firewood, an Auto Wash and Pedulla's Liquor and Wine gift card, and a vintage wine press. Thanks to everyone who bid, donated, or just watched the excitement unfold. Your support makes a real difference for Seneca Lake!















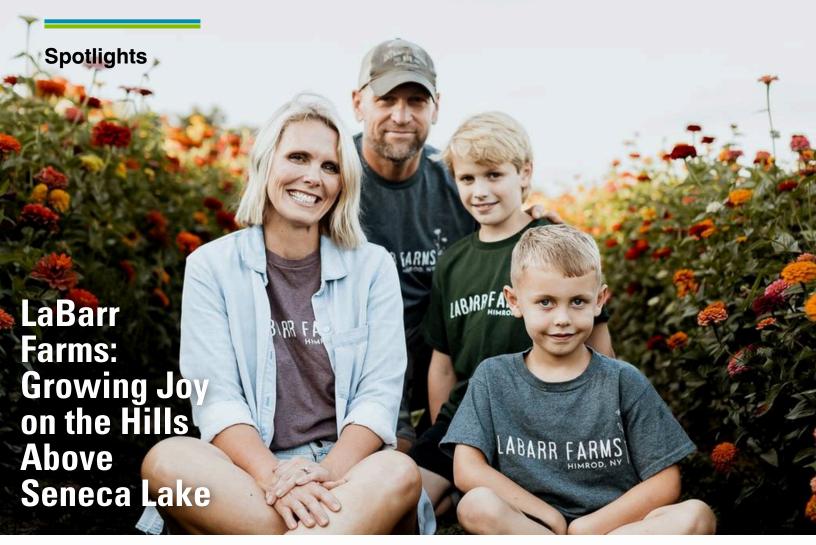






Around the Lake Happenings

From top to bottom, left to right:
Volunteers at the AIS Landing Blitz
educating boaters on stopping
invasive species; Pure Waters at
Geneva Drumstock music festival;
members unveiling an educational
kiosk; volunteers on the Seneca Lake
Wine Train; Bill Roege presenting at
Seneca Falls Rotary.



LaBarr Farms, a family-run flower farm above Seneca Lake in Himrod, NY, welcomes visitors to explore their fields and farm stand. We spoke with co-founder Heather LaBarr about their journey and farm life.

Can you share the story of how LaBarr Farms got started?

At LaBarr Farms, our farming journey began in 2020 with a deep-rooted connection to the land that has been nurtured over many years. We always sensed that there was something special about this land and its connection to Seneca Lake. We started small, growing garden produce for ourselves and our neighbors. We wanted to provide an experience for our children that focused on the joy of growing your own food; practicing organic farming methods and being a steward of our community. Our small garden expanded to include an adorable flock of chickens, maple syrup, strawberries, pumpkins, flowers, and sweet corn. We added a farm stand to the farm and enjoyed the connection we began to establish with our neighborhood and local community.

After a few years enjoying this farming model, an idea began to form to incorporate the upper fields of the farm. The sweeping view of Seneca Lake called for something special, something vibrant and welcoming, something peaceful and grounding, something that evoked joy and happiness — a field of flowers open to all!

The dream of cultivating a space where people could experience the sheer delight of hand-picking their own flowers took root, mirroring our belief in the simple pleasures and profound connections that nature can provide. It was important that we create a space that was at its core a working family farm but also could be something a bit more magical for our visitors! This season we've added honeybees, a wildflower meadow with walking trails, and become a Monarch Way Station to continue to strive towards our goal of sustainability and creating a symbiotic relationship with this beautiful planet!

How does being on Seneca Lake influence the way you farm or connect with the community?

Seneca Lake shapes everything we do here at LaBarr Farms. It creates a microclimate that moderates temperature extremes for our flower crops, encourages stewardship through sustainable farming practices, and provides the most beautiful backdrop for our flower fields. You can't visit our farm without noticing and connecting with the lake — it's a huge part of what ties us to the land.

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Spotlights

How does your family participate in the farm day-to-day?

We are a family farm. Each seed we grow is planned, planted, and cultivated by us. We make farm decisions based on a family-first model. We structure our business practices around a farm-family balance that works only if everyone works together. We include our children in every aspect of farming — they learn with us as we try out new crops or farming practices and we encourage them to participate in the parts of the farm that light them up! Our boys play an active role in our farm; you'll often find them playing hide-and-seek in the sunflower rows, planting tulips and peonies, and helping out with various farm chores.

What experience do you hope visitors take away from the farm stand or flower fields? Our ultimate goal is that each visitor to the farm is left with a feeling of peaceful contentment. It's easy to get caught up in the busy lifestyles we all lead: quicker, more convenient, more efficient is the standard now. When visitors come to our farm stand or wander through the flower fields, we hope they leave with more than just fresh flowers — we hope they take with them a sense of connection. To the land, to the seasons, and to something slower and more intentional. We want them to feel the joy of seeing where things grow, the peace that comes from being surrounded by natural beauty, and the warmth of real hands-on experiences. Whether you're cutting sunflowers with your kids, walking through rows of blooms with a friend, or just taking a quiet moment for yourself, we hope it brings a moment of grounding — a reminder that even small, local things can

<u>"We hope each visitor leaves with a little more peace than they arrived with." - Heather LaBarr</u>

Fall is here. What does the season look like for you at the farm?

We spend these weeks enjoying the last of the harvest, preparing the land for rest, and reflecting on the growing season. We put in the fall cover crops, plant bare-root peonies and tulip bulbs, and work to give back to the soil what it gave us during the busy growing season. It's a time of hard work and reflection. We make notes about what worked well, what needs to be changed, and how we can make the farm experience more meaningful for our guests next season. We welcome the seasonality of the farm, the ebb and flow of Earth's natural rhythm, and begin the preparation for next year.



nourish us deeply.





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Jody Tyler (Keuka Park)
Jacob Welch (Himrod)

Staff

Coming Soon! Association Director director@senecalake.org

Kelly Blackhurst Community Engagement Coordinator info@senecalake.org

mailing address: P.O. Box 274 Geneva NY 14424

physical address: 20 E Castle St Geneva NY 14424

Stay connected!







www.senecalake.org

Seneca Lake PURE WATERS Association

In Memory / In Honor

We are grateful for those who choose to honor loved ones through support of Seneca Lake Pure Waters Association. Their legacy helps protect the lake and our community.

Dr. Tom Foster Miley Gibson Dr. Marian Rose Michael Schamel John and Mary Ann Short

Protecting Seneca Lake, One Stream at a Time

Help keep Seneca Lake healthy! Anyone can adopt a stream—friends and families can team up. Adopters get a certificate and recognition in our newsletter and online.

Thank You to Our Adopt-A-Stream Donors

Mary O'Connell, Keuka Outlet
Sue Martin, Perry Point Rd Stream
Mark Gibson, Ravena Road Stream (In Memory of Miley)
James Marshall III, Reeder Creek (In Memory of our Ancestors)
Jody Tyler, Keuka Outlet
Erickson Family, Keuka Outlet (In Honor of the Erickson Family)
Wendy Belling, Catharine Creek (In Honor of the Martin Family)
Jennifer Grant & Keith Waldron, Kashong Creek

Want to adopt a stream near you?

https://senecalake.org/adopt-a-stream/

