



Annual Report

2025-2026

ABOUT **Seneca Lake PURE WATERS Association**

Seneca Lake Pure Waters Association was incorporated in 1990 as a Section 501(c)3 nonprofit corporation dedicated to understanding, preserving, and improving Seneca Lake through research, public education, and advocacy.

During its 36-year history, the association has adapted its focus and addressed a variety of threats to the lake. Over the years, studies and informational efforts have covered a wide range of topics such as:

- Identifying various contamination and pollution threats
- Supporting research studies focusing on the lake's limnology (aquatic ecosystem), invasive species, and cyanobacteria (blue-green algae)
- Developing watershed management plans
- Informing municipal practices, such as land use ordinances and uniform onsite wastewater management

Today, Seneca Lake Pure Waters is a vibrant and growing organization that is adding new, or improving existing, water quality programs each year. Monitoring programs leverage research partners to provide essential data on stream and lake nutrients as well as harmful algal blooms and invasive species. Pure Waters is also an important partner for implementing the latest watershed management plan and is taking an active stewardship role by funding physical projects that protect the lake.

Pure Waters is committed to improving and adapting to meet the Seneca Lake watershed's future needs.



senecalake.org

**Scan QR to join, renew
or volunteer today!**

<http://senecalake.org/membership>

<http://senecalake.org/Volunteer>

President's Message

Building Toward the Future

This past year reminded us that Seneca Lake is a living ecosystem experiencing a period of remarkable change and variability.

A summer and fall marked by unusually low lake levels gave way to severe spring flooding. Harmful algal blooms continued to challenge our communities, while researchers observed unexpected changes in aquatic vegetation. We continued studying the effects of invasive species, emerging contaminants, and other pressures on the watershed. **These events remind us that the Seneca Lake watershed is becoming increasingly variable—and that understanding those changes has never been more important.**

That reality reinforces the importance of Pure Waters' mission.

For many years, Pure Waters has invested in science, education, partnerships, and stewardship to better understand and protect Seneca Lake. Long-term monitoring, research, and community engagement help distinguish temporary fluctuations from meaningful ecological change, empowering our communities and partners to make informed decisions about the future of the watershed.

This report reflects that investment. Our volunteers continue building one of the Finger Lakes' most valuable long-term environmental datasets. Our education programs are inspiring the next generation of watershed stewards. Working alongside partners, we are helping translate knowledge into practical stewardship action that strengthens the long-term health and resilience of the Seneca Lake watershed.

None of this happens without a **strong organization and an engaged community**. Our volunteers, members, donors, foundations, staff, Board of Directors, interns, and partners each contribute their time, expertise, and resources to this shared mission. Every hour volunteered, every dollar invested, and every partnership strengthened helps build a healthier, **more resilient watershed** for future generations.

Thank you for being part of that investment and for helping to ensure that our beloved Seneca Lake remains healthy and vibrant for those who will inherit it.



—William H. Roeger, President

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Strategic Approach

Protecting Seneca Lake Through Science, Education, Partnerships, and Action

Pure Waters exists to preserve, protect, and promote Seneca Lake water quality—its natural beauty and ecological health—for current and future generations.

Our work is guided by a simple belief that lasting watershed protection begins with understanding the lake, educating the community, and working together to solve problems.

Over the past several years our long-term investments in science, education, partnerships, and organizational capacity are increasingly allowing Pure Waters to translate knowledge into practical actions that improve the health of the watershed.

Our work is organized around four interconnected pillars:

1 Water Quality Science



Pure Waters collects long-term data, supports research, and monitors emerging threats to better understand the lake.

2 Education & Community Engagement



Pure Waters educational and engagement programs, including advocacy, help residents, students, visitors, and decision-makers understand the watershed and inspire all to adopt and implement practices that protect Seneca Lake.

3 Stewardship Action



Pure Waters and partners apply scientific knowledge through meaningful projects, stewardship initiatives, and informed public policy.

4 Organizational Strength



Pure Waters organizes the leadership, staff, volunteers, partnerships, and financial resources needed to sustain and expand our mission.

These four pillars are interconnected.

- Science **informs** education and helps identify priorities.
- Education **inspires** stewardship action.
- Stewardship actions turn knowledge gained into measurable **improvements**.
- Organizational strength provides the people and resources that **make it all possible**.

Working together with hundreds of volunteers and dozens of partner organizations, Pure Waters is helping build a healthier and more resilient Seneca Lake watershed.

How We Accomplish Our Mission . . .

Preserve, Protect, and Promote Seneca Lake Water Quality



Result: a resilient ecosystem and better water quality for future generations

Building a Strong Organization

Protecting Seneca Lake requires more than successful programs—it requires a strong organization capable of sustaining and expanding those efforts over time. During 2025–2026, Pure Waters continued strengthening both its people and its financial resources, providing the capacity needed to support a growing portfolio of science, education, and restoration initiatives.

People Make Pure Waters Possible

Pure Waters' greatest resource continues to be its people. More than **170 individual volunteers** (many serving in multiple capacities), supported by a dedicated Board of Directors, committee leaders, staff, and interns, contributed thousands of hours advancing the Association's mission. Together, our community provides expertise in science, education, communications, fundraising, governance, and community outreach—multiplying the impact of our small professional staff many times over.

The Organization Development Committee continued strengthening the Association by improving volunteer recruitment and placement, refining onboarding practices, recruiting future board members, updating human resources policies, and ensuring that volunteers are connected with opportunities that best match their interests and experience. These efforts help build the leadership pipeline needed to sustain Pure Waters well into the future.

In November 2025, we onboarded a new Association Director, Benjamin Klein, who brings unique skills and enthusiasm to the Pure Waters team. Another significant milestone was the expansion of our internship program. Alongside the new Association Director, Pure Waters welcomed two paid interns, a videography intern, and a summer intern from Hobart and William Smith Colleges. These students made meaningful contributions to communications, graphic design, social media, publications, video production, field work, and office operations while gaining valuable experience in nonprofit environmental stewardship. Their work significantly expanded the organization's capacity and demonstrated the value of investing in the next generation of conservation leaders.

OFFICERS



PRESIDENT
Bill Roege



VICE PRESIDENT
Mark Petzold



TREASURER
Charles Fausold



SECRETARY
Mark Gibson

BOARD OF DIRECTORS (as of September 2025)

Class of 2026

Charles Fausold (Valois)
Timothy Johnson (Corning)
Jim McGinnis (Watkins Glen)
Stuart Messur (Geneva)
Mark Swinnerton (Hector)

Class of 2027

Peter Budmen (Penn Yan)
Thomas Burrall (Geneva)
Lisa Greenwood (Varick)
Kristin Gusack (Hector)
Linda Sampson (Dundee)
Jody Tyler (Keuka Park)
Jacob Welch (Himrod)

Class of 2028

Kelly Coughlin (Geneva)
Peggy Focarino (Penn Yan)
Mark Gibson (Himrod)
Mark Petzold (Geneva)
Bill Roege (Penn Yan)
John Kirk (Geneva)
Erik Olsen (Penn Yan)

STAFF

Association Director: Benjamin Klein

Community Engagement Coordinator: Kelly Blackhurst

Interns: Andrew Hanna, HWS '28 –and– Mia Nixon, HWS '28

Awards

Each year Pure Waters is proud to present awards to a few of the people who manifest the dedication and support that makes it possible for Pure Waters to thrive.



Friend of Seneca Founders Award — Don Kloeber



The Friend of Seneca Founders Award recognizes individuals or organizations whose long-term efforts have significantly advanced the mission of Seneca Lake Pure Waters.

Don Kloeber has combined vision, generosity, and leadership to help Pure Waters expand its impact throughout the watershed. Beyond his generous financial support, Don has championed innovative fundraising ideas, provided leadership for the Sampson State Park information kiosk, supported the Sediment, Nutrient, and Pollution Reduction Program, and recruited new volunteers, donors, and partners. His enthusiasm for Pure Waters has inspired others to become involved, multiplying the impact of his own contributions and helping position the organization for continued growth.

Mary Rose Memorial Volunteer of the Year Award — Mimi Gridley and Sue Martin

This award honors volunteers who have gone above and beyond in service to Seneca Lake Pure Waters.



The strength of Pure Waters has always depended on dedicated volunteers, and few exemplify that commitment better than **Mimi Gridley** and **Sue Martin**. Recruited by Mary Rose herself, Mimi has spent more than a decade monitoring Big Stream and now serves as its Stream Lead while continuing as a dedicated Harmful Algal Bloom volunteer. Sue has devoted many years to stream monitoring, HABs, CSLAP, CoCoRaHS, and the Lake Level Committee, always willing to step forward wherever help is needed. Together, they have strengthened the volunteer network that forms the backbone of Pure Waters' water quality monitoring programs, ensuring that the Association can continue providing reliable scientific data year after year.

Rich Adams Memorial President's Award — Jill Ritter

Presented at the discretion of the President, this award recognizes extraordinary leadership and service to Seneca Lake Pure Waters.

For more than a decade, Jill Ritter has been one of the organizational leaders behind Pure Waters' continued growth and success. Whether serving as Vice President of Operations, Treasurer, committee chair, fundraiser, or trusted advisor, Jill has consistently stepped forward wherever the organization needed her most. She strengthened Pure Waters' financial management, helped guide strategic decisions, supported staff, and, during the transition between Association Directors, ensured that critical operations continued without interruption. Jill's leadership, institutional knowledge, and unwavering commitment have helped build the strong organization Pure Waters is today.



Membership

Membership Tier	#	Business Membership Tier	#	Giving Level
Steward	219		2	< \$100
Partner	248	Bronze	18	\$100
Protector	75	Silver	16	\$250
Lake Defender	32	Gold	9	\$500
Watershed Benefactor	47	Platinum	7	\$1,000+
Total	621		52	

Financial Stewardship

The organization remains financially strong.

Pure Waters continues to maintain a strong financial foundation while carefully managing resources entrusted by members, donors, foundations, and grant partners. Although the Association reported a surplus during the fiscal year, much of that balance represents lower expenditures for salary (a 4-month gap in the Association Director position) plus delayed payments for some programs as well as restricted grant funding that will be carried forward into the coming year. Careful financial management allows Pure Waters to undertake multi-year initiatives while maintaining the flexibility needed to respond to emerging opportunities and challenges.

Fundraising takes many forms and continues to perform well—some examples:

- Our Membership and Annual Appeal campaigns are robust.

- The annual fundraising soiree adds significantly to our resources.
- About half of the Sediment, Nutrient, and Pollution Reduction Program is funded by a special matching campaign.
- Memorial gifts are increasing.
- We sell advertisements in a widely distributed business directory that includes information about Pure Waters and Seneca Lake.
- Seneca Lake Order of Brewers (SLOBs) and Seneca Lake Wine Trail contributed substantially with a collaborative beer sales campaign and a wine auction.

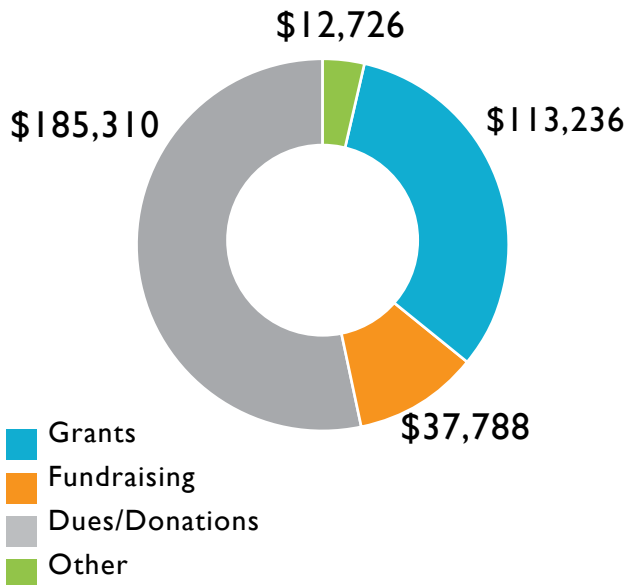
In addition to our fundraising campaigns, The Rose Family Foundation provided a very generous grant of \$91,400 to fund our Hemlock Woolly Adelgid project into Spring 2027 and our Nearshore Nutrient project in Summer of 2026.



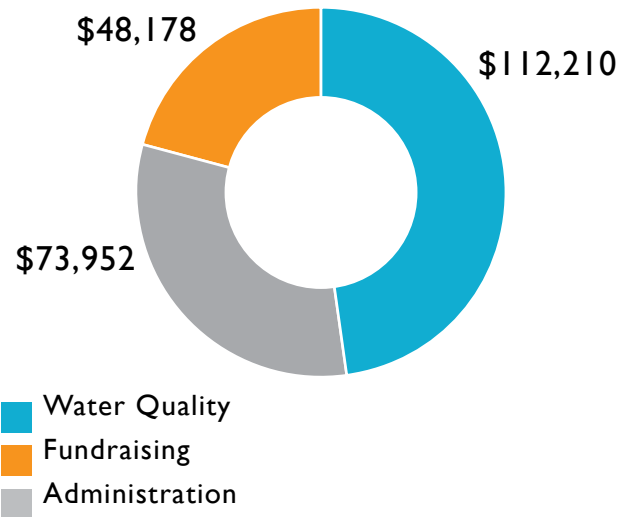
Financial Exhibits

BALANCE SHEET	2025–2026	2024–2025
ASSETS		
Bank Accounts	\$409,031.05	\$298,113.62
Accounts Receivable	\$1,000.00	--
Other Current Assets	\$2,918.86	\$3,396.44
Fixed Assets	\$36,537.06	\$36,768.18
TOTALS	\$449,486.97	\$338,278.24
LIABILITIES & EQUITY		
Current Liabilities	\$4,935.63	\$3,970.65
Restricted and Unrestricted Funds	\$309,831.37	\$380,921.96
Net Income	\$114,719.97	-\$46,614.37
TOTAL LIABILITY AND EQUITY	\$449,486.97	\$338,278.24

FY 2025-2026 Revenue \$349,060



FY 2025-2026 Expenses \$234,340



REVENUE AND EXPENSE SUMMARY

REVENUE

	2025-2026	2024-2025
Grants	\$113,235.83	\$14,016.73
Dues/Donations	\$185,310.28	\$203,546.88
Fundraising	\$37,788.55	\$34,020.58
Other	\$12,726.23	\$13,296.95
TOTAL INCOME	\$349,060.79	\$264,881.14

EXPENSES

	2025-2026	2024-2025
Water Quality Programs	\$112,210.41	\$189,391.86
Membership/Fundraising	\$48,177.89	\$57,710.50
Administration	\$73,952.52	\$64,393.15
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$234,340.82	\$311,495.51

Total labor costs (salary and benefits) in 2025-2026 were \$82,201.99. Water Quality Programs accounted for 29.2%; Membership and Fundraising, 32.9%; and Administration, 37.9%. Much of the Water Quality labor cost is directed toward educational activities developed and delivered by the staff while the Administration costs include all taxes and extra benefits.

Since the Association's revenue exceeds \$250,000, we are required to have an independent financial review. In summer 2025, Stokes, Visca, Hucko & Barone, CPAs, LLC of Rochester, NY, completed the 2024-2025 review with no issues found. It is reviewing this past fiscal year's finances. It is responsible for filing the Association's Form 990.

Engagement, Education, and Advocacy

Building an Informed Watershed Community

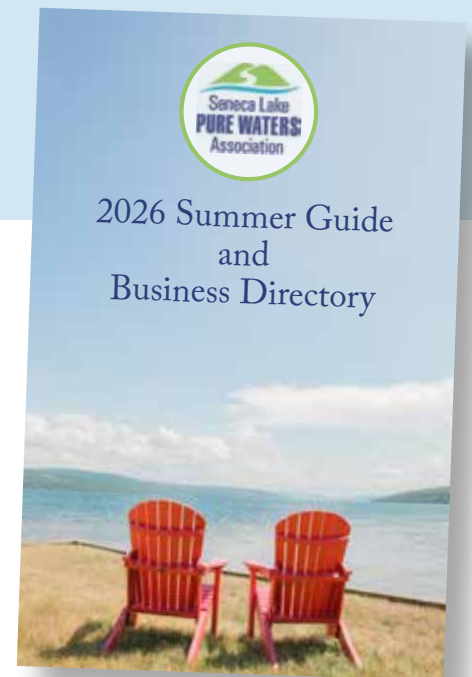
Protecting Seneca Lake depends on an informed and engaged community. Through community engagement, education, and advocacy, Pure Waters connects people with the science of the watershed, helping residents, visitors, students, landowners, and decision-makers understand both the challenges facing the lake and the practical actions that protect it. Every program, presentation, publication, and partnership helps transform knowledge into stewardship and stewardship into lasting action throughout the Seneca Lake watershed.

Community Engagement

Protecting Seneca Lake depends on an informed and engaged community. Community engagement is how Pure Waters transforms science and best practices into stewardship—connecting residents, visitors, volunteers, educators, and decision-makers with the knowledge they need to understand the watershed and the practical actions that protect it. Through presentations, community events, publications, digital communications, partnerships, and timely water quality updates, the Association helps make complex environmental issues accessible, relevant, and actionable for everyone who cares about Seneca Lake.

During 2025–2026, Pure Waters **significantly expanded** both the reach and impact of its community engagement efforts. More people than ever connected with the Association through presentations, social media, newsletters,

the website, and water quality alerts. Whether seeking the latest harmful algal bloom conditions, learning about lake levels, exploring restoration projects, or discovering opportunities to volunteer, thousands of residents and visitors turned to Pure Waters for timely, science-based information. The Association's growing audience and record levels of engagement reflect more than successful communications—they demonstrate the community's increasing trust in Pure Waters as a reliable source of information about the health of Seneca Lake and its watershed.



As Pure Waters continues to expand its scientific and stewardship programs, our community engagement, coupled with practical opportunities to get involved, ensures that useful knowledge leads to informed decisions and meaningful action. The Association is building a stronger community of stewards committed to protecting Seneca Lake for future generations.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT BY THE NUMBERS

- Over **2 million** digital impressions across Facebook and Instagram
- **25,000+** website visitors seeking trusted watershed information
- **183,000+** emails delivered with an impressive average 52% open rate
- **15,000+** HAB text alerts delivered to 1000+ subscribers during bloom season
- **Nine** public presentations and numerous community events throughout the watershed
- **Publications:**
 - Three *Lake Watch* newsletters
 - Ten Water Quality newsletters during the HAB season
 - Twenty-five website news articles
 - 2025 Summer Guide & Business Directory



K–12 Watershed Education



Pure Waters continued expanding its watershed education program in partnership with North Street Elementary School in Geneva, completing the second year of a three-year curriculum introducing students to the science of the Seneca Lake watershed. During the 2025–2026 school year, approximately **125 third-grade** students participated in *Wonders of Water*, exploring the water cycle and the importance of freshwater resources. At the same time, another **125 fourth-grade** students completed the first year of “*What Is a Watershed?*”, learning how land, streams, and lakes are connected throughout the Seneca Lake watershed. The program includes high-needs and bilingual classrooms, ensuring students from diverse backgrounds have opportunities to explore environmental science.

Planning is already underway for the third year of the curriculum, which will introduce fifth-grade students to watershed stewardship and the ways human activities influence water quality. Once completed, the three-course program will provide students with a comprehensive introduction to the science, ecology, and stewardship of Seneca Lake.



“The hands-on activities engaged the students and expanded their knowledge about why water is so important to all. The program ties in extremely well with the BOCES4Science curriculum we use.”

—Matty Brooks, 3rd Grade Teacher,
North Street School

Thanks to generous support from the Wyckoff Family Foundation, the curriculum is fully funded, and Pure Waters hopes to expand the program to additional school districts throughout the watershed.



EDUCATION BY THE NUMBERS

- Second year of watershed curriculum
- Approximately **250** students participated
- Third- and fourth-grade curriculum completed
- Fifth-grade curriculum under development
- High-needs and bilingual classrooms included
- Three-year curriculum fully funded by the Wyckoff Family Foundation

Lake Friendly Living

Lake Friendly Living encourages residents and visitors to take simple, practical actions that help protect Seneca Lake. By promoting shoreline stewardship, native landscaping, and environmentally responsible property management, the program demonstrates how individual choices can collectively improve water quality and strengthen the watershed.

During Lake Friendly Living Month in May 2026, Karen Welch presented a well-attended program at Big Alice Brewing highlighting the many benefits of native plants. Participants learned how native landscaping reduces erosion and runoff, supports pollinators and biodiversity, and creates resilient landscapes requiring fewer inputs over time.

The committee also expanded its efforts beyond traditional education by partnering with the Village of Watkins Glen to restore three large rain gardens in Clute Park using native plants. More than **60 volunteers** committed to participate before high lake levels and continued rainfall forced postponement of the planting into

summer 2026. Once completed, the gardens will provide a highly visible demonstration of how native landscaping improves stormwater management while enhancing one of Watkins Glen's most popular waterfront parks.

By combining education with hands-on community projects, Lake Friendly Living continues encouraging practical stewardship—one property, one garden, and one homeowner at a time.

LAKE FRIENDLY LIVING BY THE NUMBERS

- Fifth annual Lake Friendly Living Month
- Community presentation on native plants
- Partnership with the Village of Watkins Glen
- Three Clute Park rain gardens planned
- More than **60** volunteers committed
- Promoting practical shoreline stewardship

Invasive Species Prevention and Education

Preventing the introduction and spread of invasive species is one of the most effective ways to protect Seneca Lake's ecosystem. Because people are often the primary means by which invasive plants, insects, and aquatic organisms spread, education plays a critical role in prevention. Pure Waters works with the Finger Lakes Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM), hosted by the Finger Lakes Institute, to help residents and visitors recognize invasive species and adopt simple practices that reduce their spread.

Although regional staffing changes temporarily reduced monitoring activities, Pure Waters maintained its public education efforts throughout the year. Volunteers participated in New York State Invasive Species Awareness Week, staffed educational exhibits, conducted Great Lakes Commission-funded boat launch outreach, maintained aquatic invasive species disposal stations, and expanded public awareness through presentations and social media highlighting threats such as Hemlock Woolly Adelgid, Spotted Lanternfly, Asian Longhorned Beetle, and Hydrilla.

Looking ahead, the Association is expanding volunteer recruitment while working with regional partners to strengthen invasive species prevention. By helping people recognize threats and adopt practices that prevent their spread, Pure Waters is helping protect Seneca Lake before new invasions become established.

INVASIVE SPECIES PREVENTION BY THE NUMBERS

- Partnership with Finger Lakes PRISM
- Invasive Species Awareness Week participation
- Great Lakes Commission Boat Launch Blitz
- Educational outreach at the Finger Lakes Welcome Center
- Aquatic invasive species disposal stations maintained
- Volunteer recruitment expanding





Lake Level Management

The dramatic swings in lake levels experienced during the past year reinforced the importance of informed communication, collaboration, and long-term planning. Following severe flooding after the March 31, 2026, storm, Pure Waters reinvigorated its Lake Level Committee to help residents understand rapidly changing conditions, improve communication among the organizations responsible for managing lake levels, and encourage long-term improvements in water management.

Working with volunteers, elected officials, water managers, and partner organizations, the committee developed a lake level forecasting model and public alert system, improved coordination among agencies throughout the Oswego River Basin, and hosted a public webinar explaining the complexities of lake level management and shoreline resilience. The committee also advocated for improved watershed coordination and began exploring opportunities to modernize lake level

management using today's hydrologic data and forecasting capabilities.

The committee's work demonstrates that informed communities are better prepared to respond to changing conditions. As weather patterns become increasingly variable, Pure Waters will continue supporting science-based communication and collaboration that help strengthen the resilience of shoreline communities throughout the watershed.

LAKE LEVEL BY THE NUMBERS

- Lake Level Committee reinvigorated
- Forecast model and public alert system developed
- Public webinar on lake level management
- Meetings with local, state, and federal agencies
- Support for improved Oswego Basin coordination
- Long-term planning for shoreline resilience

Government Relations

Protecting Seneca Lake increasingly requires collaboration with elected officials, government agencies, and partner organizations. During 2025–2026, Pure Waters expanded its non-partisan government relations efforts by strengthening relationships with local, state, and regional leaders while advocating for policies that improve watershed stewardship.

Association Director Benjamin Klein participated in the inaugural Finger Lakes Advocacy Day in Albany, joining representatives from lake associations throughout the region to meet with state legislators and their staffs. These conversations established new relationships with Assembly Members, State Senators, county leaders, and agency representatives, creating additional opportunities to communicate the ecological and economic importance of protecting Seneca Lake.

Throughout the year, Pure Waters advocated for improved lake level management, supported watershed legislation, collaborated with the Finger Lakes Regional Watershed Alliance and other partners, and continued discussions with state and federal agencies regarding the Seneca Army Depot, flood management, and other issues affecting the watershed. Working in a non-partisan manner, the Association seeks to ensure that sound science and long-term watershed stewardship remain part of public policy discussions at every level of government.



Water Quality Science

Understanding an Evolving Ecosystem

For over a decade, science has been at the heart of Pure Waters' mission. As Seneca Lake experiences increasing environmental variability—from changing precipitation patterns to shifts in aquatic vegetation, harmful algal blooms, invasive species, and emerging contaminants—the importance of long-term scientific observation has never been greater.

Through our citizen scientists, working alongside universities, government agencies, and laboratories, Pure Waters has built one of the Finger Lakes' most comprehensive water quality science programs. Our long-term monitoring and research help us understand not only the current condition of the lake, but how its ecosystem is changing over time. These scientific investments provide the knowledge needed to identify emerging threats, understand ecological processes, evaluate restoration efforts, and guide stewardship throughout the watershed.

Stream Monitoring Program

Now in its twelfth consecutive year, Pure Waters' Stream Monitoring Program continues to build one of the longest continuous water quality records for Seneca Lake's tributaries. During 2025, volunteers monitored nineteen sampling locations in eight streams, expanding the program with the addition of Wilson Creek and Mill Creek. Working in partnership with the Community Science Institute, volunteers collected both baseline and storm-event samples to better understand the nutrients, bacteria, and other pollutants entering Seneca Lake.

Beyond documenting current conditions, the program's long-term dataset has become an important resource for understanding watershed trends and has already contributed to the scientific foundation of the Seneca-Keuka Nine Element Watershed Management Plan.

Continued monitoring allows researchers to identify long-term changes, evaluate restoration projects, and better understand how changing land use, weather patterns, and watershed management practices influence water quality over time.

Citizen Statewide Lake Assessment Program (CSLAP)

Since 2017, Pure Waters has participated in New York's Citizen Statewide Lake Assessment Program (CSLAP), one of the nation's longest-running volunteer lake monitoring programs. Working in partnership with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and the New York State Federation of Lake Associations (NYSFOLA), Pure Waters volunteers collect standardized water quality data that contributes to the long-term scientific



understanding of Seneca Lake and lakes throughout New York State.

During the summer, ten trained volunteers sampled four locations around Seneca Lake, including three recreational sites and one mid-lake drinking water site. Water samples, water clarity, and temperature profiles were collected using standardized CSLAP protocols and analyzed by the Upstate Freshwater Institute. Because the same methods are used year after year, the program provides a consistent record for identifying long-term changes in lake health and water quality.

Pure Waters proudly supports this statewide partnership by coordinating volunteers, collecting samples, and contributing to program costs. Together with our other monitoring efforts, CSLAP provides an important scientific foundation for understanding changes in Seneca Lake.

Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB) Program

Pure Waters' Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB) Program remains the Association's largest volunteer initiative and one of the most comprehensive shoreline monitoring efforts in New York State. Since its beginning in 2014, the program has become a trusted source of timely information for waterfront property owners, recreational users, researchers, and state agencies. During the summer of 2025, approximately 90 trained volunteers monitored 82 shoreline zones, covering nearly 80% of Seneca Lake's shoreline.

Although the 2025 season was less intense than the record-breaking bloom year of 2024, it was still the program's second most active season on record. Volunteers submitted 499 shoreline observations, resulting in 125 confirmed blooms.

Volunteers report observations through a



mobile application, allowing Pure Waters to rapidly verify blooms and submit reports to the DEC's statewide HAB reporting system. The Association also continues to operate its Lake Alert text notification system, providing subscribers with daily updates whenever blooms are confirmed.

Together, these efforts help residents make informed decisions while creating one of the Finger Lakes' longest-running volunteer HAB datasets. As this record continues to grow, it is becoming an increasingly valuable resource for understanding how harmful algal blooms change over time and for supporting future research and management efforts.

Stream Flow and Phosphorus Monitoring

Understanding how much phosphorus reaches Seneca Lake requires more than measuring water quality—it also requires knowing how much water is flowing through each tributary. During 2025, Pure Waters continued expanding its Stream Flow & Phosphorus Monitoring Program by collecting 120 stream flow measurements and 117 nutrient samples from streams throughout the watershed. These data allow researchers to calculate phosphorus loads, providing a much clearer picture of where nutrients are entering Seneca Lake.

As additional years of data are collected, the program will continue improving watershed models while helping identify where restoration efforts can produce the greatest improvements in water quality.

Nearshore Nutrient Cycle Research

One of the most important unanswered questions facing Seneca Lake is why harmful algal blooms and excessive Cladophora growth continue to occur despite the lake's relatively low phosphorus concentrations. To help answer that question, Pure Waters and the Finger Lakes Institute launched an innovative Nearshore Nutrient Cycle Research Project examining whether nutrient conditions near shore differ from those measured in the open lake.

The project combines shoreline nutrient sampling with HAB observations, Cladophora reports, weather information, aquatic vegetation surveys, and existing lake monitoring data to better understand the ecological processes affecting the nearshore environment.

The first year established an important scientific baseline. While nutrient concentrations near shore were generally similar to those measured in the open lake, volunteers and researchers observed dramatically reduced aquatic vegetation and lower-than-expected Cladophora growth throughout much of the study area. These observations highlight the complexity of Seneca Lake's ecology and reinforce the importance of continued long-term monitoring.

Recognizing the value of this research, the Rose Family Foundation provided generous funding to continue the project into a second year.

PFAS Monitoring

Pure Waters continued monitoring per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in streams originating from the former Seneca Army Depot through support from Freshwater Future. Two rounds of sampling captured both low-flow and high-flow conditions, providing additional insight into how PFAS move through the watershed during different hydrologic conditions. Results continued to show elevated concentrations in Kendaia Creek, while five of the six monitored streams exhibited



substantially higher PFAS concentrations during high-flow events, indicating that stormwater plays an important role in transporting these contaminants.

The Association's continued monitoring has improved understanding of PFAS movement beyond the Army Depot property and helped elevate awareness among state and federal agencies. During a public meeting in May 2026, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers announced interim remedial actions to address PFAS contamination affecting Kendaia Creek and groundwater near the former Fire Training Area, pending federal funding. Pure Waters will continue supporting independent monitoring while advocating for transparent reporting and effective remediation.

Neonicotinoid Monitoring

Pure Waters continues monitoring neonicotinoid insecticides in Seneca Lake tributaries as part of an ongoing effort to understand emerging contaminants in the watershed. During 2025, the program expanded by adding additional streams, including Hector Falls Creek, Wilson Creek, and Breakneck Creek.

The program has taken on added importance following the arrival of the Spotted Lanternfly, whose management in vineyards may require increased use of neonicotinoid insecticides.

Working with Cornell University, Pure Waters is establishing a scientific baseline before widespread vineyard treatments occur, allowing future researchers to better understand how management practices may influence water quality over time.

Water Quality Assessment by Volunteer Evaluators (WAVES)

Healthy streams support healthy lakes. Through New York's Water Quality Assessment by Volunteer Evaluators (WAVES) program, Pure Waters volunteers monitor aquatic insects that serve as biological indicators of stream health. Unlike chemical measurements, which provide only a snapshot in time, these organisms reflect stream conditions over many months and provide an important complement to the Association's other monitoring programs.

Despite unusually dry summer conditions, six teams of volunteers successfully completed seven biological assessments. Together with stream chemistry, these surveys continue building a long-term understanding of watershed health.

WATER QUALITY SCIENCE BY THE NUMBERS

2025–2026 Highlights

- **12th** consecutive year of tributary monitoring
- **19** monitoring locations in **8** streams
- **120** stream flow measurements with **117** associated nutrient samples
- **90** HAB volunteers monitoring **82** shoreline zones
- **499** HAB observations submitted
- **10** CSLAP volunteers monitoring **4** lake stations
- **7** biological stream assessments (WAVES)
- **6** shoreline nutrient monitoring stations
- **6** PFAS tributaries monitored
- **8** tributaries monitored for neonicotinoids

Stewardship in Action

Turning Understanding into Lasting Stewardship

Understanding the watershed is only the beginning. Lasting improvements to Seneca Lake occur when science is translated into stewardship by landowners, municipalities, conservation organizations, and other partners working throughout the watershed.

The Seneca-Keuka Nine Element Watershed Management Plan provides the scientific roadmap for that stewardship by identifying priority watersheds, recommending restoration strategies, and encouraging coordinated action across the watershed. During the past year, Pure Waters strengthened its commitment to help implement the Plan by helping communities understand where restoration is most needed, connecting partners who can implement projects, and investing in watershed improvements that reduce pollution, strengthen ecological resilience, and improve the long-term health of the Seneca Lake watershed. As the Association's highest strategic priority, implementation of the Nine Element Plan will continue guiding our stewardship efforts for years to come.

The programs highlighted below demonstrate how partnerships, science, and community investment are helping improve the long-term health and resilience of the Seneca Lake watershed.

Sediment, Nutrient, and Pollution Reduction (SNPR)

The most effective way to improve water quality is to keep sediment, nutrients, and other pollutants from reaching Seneca Lake in the first place. Pure Waters' Sediment, Nutrient, and Pollution Reduction (SNPR) Program partners with County Soil and Water Conservation Districts throughout the watershed to fund projects that reduce erosion, improve stormwater management, and prevent phosphorus and other pollutants from entering the lake and its tributaries. Each project is selected for its

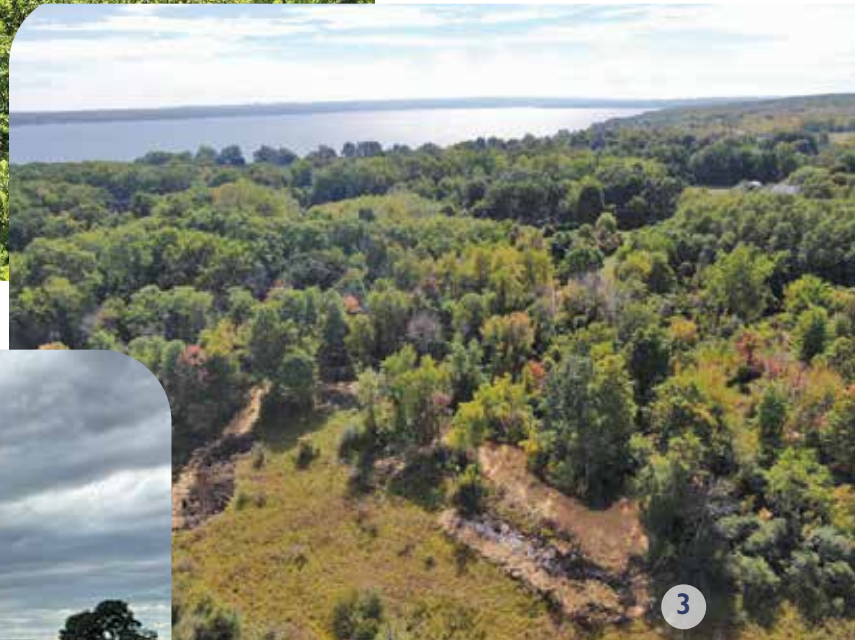
measurable environmental benefit, readiness for implementation, and alignment with the Seneca-Keuka Nine Element Watershed Management Plan.

During 2025–2026, Pure Waters approved **\$35,000** to support four high-impact projects across the watershed. These projects included construction of vernal pools to capture stormwater and restore wetland habitat, agricultural cover crops to reduce soil erosion, improvements to manure management systems, and stabilization of an eroding drainage channel transporting sediment into Wilson Creek. Together, these projects continue the program's focus on reducing pollution at its source while strengthening the



Photos:

1. Cover Crops
2. Agricultural Waste System
3. Vernal Pools at Kashong Conservancy



watershed's resilience to increasingly intense storm events.

The program also continued building for the future. During the year, Pure Waters committed an additional **\$29,000** toward four new projects scheduled for 2026–2027, leveraging an estimated **\$156,000** in total project investment through partnerships with landowners and County Soil and Water Conservation Districts. Once completed, these projects are expected to prevent approximately **256 tons of sediment, 224 pounds of phosphorus, and 530 pounds of nitrogen** from entering Seneca Lake each year.

Recognizing that erosion and runoff problems often arise unexpectedly following severe

SNPR BY THE NUMBERS

2025–2026 Highlights

- **\$35,000** invested in four watershed projects
- **\$29,000** committed to four additional projects in 2026–2027
- **\$156,000** total value of 2026–2027 projects through leveraged partnerships
- **256 tons** of sediment prevented annually*
- **224 pounds** of phosphorus prevented annually*
- **530 pounds** of nitrogen prevented annually*
- **\$20,000** new Contingency Fund for urgent watershed protection

** Estimated reductions upon completion of approved 2026–2027 projects.*

storms, Pure Waters also established a new \$20,000 SNPR Contingency Fund to provide rapid financial assistance for urgent watershed protection projects. The fund combines a \$10,000 Board commitment with a matching \$10,000 grant awarded through a Hobart and William Smith Colleges philanthropy program, where students evaluated nonprofit organizations

through a competitive due diligence process before selecting Pure Waters for support. This new capability allows the Association to respond quickly when immediate action can prevent significant sediment and nutrient pollution from reaching Seneca Lake.

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

Stopping Sediment BEFORE It Reaches Seneca Lake

Following a major storm, erosion along an agricultural drainage channel threatened to carry large amounts of sediment into Wilson Creek, a tributary of Seneca Lake. Working with the Ontario County Soil and Water Conservation District, Pure Waters helped fund installation of rock grade-control structures and restoration of the channel banks to stabilize the stream and reduce future erosion.

Projects like this demonstrate how relatively modest investments can produce lasting improvements in water quality while helping communities become more resilient to increasingly intense rainfall events.



Photos:

1. Wilson Creek
2. Drainage before
3. Drainage after





Hemlock Woolly Adelgid Initiative

Eastern hemlocks are among the most important trees in the Seneca Lake watershed. Their extensive root systems stabilize steep stream banks, reducing erosion and sediment entering the lake, while their dense canopy shades streams and helps maintain the cool water temperatures essential for native fish and aquatic life. Protecting these forests is an investment in the long-term health and resilience of the Seneca Lake watershed.

After completing the watershed-wide assessment of hemlock forests last year, Pure Waters moved from planning to implementation during 2025–2026 by launching one of the Finger Lakes’ first large-scale efforts to protect hemlocks on private lands from the invasive Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA). Guided by a comprehensive Landscape

Management Plan prepared by forestry ecologist and ISA Certified Arborist Zeb Strickland of CC Environment & Planning, the program identified priority treatment areas and established a long-term strategy for protecting the watershed’s most valuable hemlock stands.

Working with private landowners and CC Environment & Planning, Pure Waters began applying targeted systemic insecticide treatments using environmentally appropriate application methods. During the year, **320 priority hemlock trees** were treated across **eight properties**, providing immediate protection for some of the watershed’s highest-priority forests while preserving the natural systems that protect Seneca Lake’s streams and shorelines.

The program also achieved an important milestone by securing an additional **\$77,000 grant from the Rose Family Foundation**, allowing treatments to expand substantially



during the coming year. This continued investment will protect many more priority trees while building on the success of the initial implementation phase.

Research from the New York State Hemlock Initiative at Cornell University also provides encouraging news. Biological controls—including predator beetles and newly introduced silver flies—are becoming established at several locations in New York, including within the Seneca Lake watershed. Current treatments are designed to protect vulnerable trees during the next several years while these natural biological controls continue to expand, offering the promise of a more sustainable long-term solution.

The Hemlock Initiative demonstrates how science, partnerships, and community investment can work together to protect one of the watershed's most valuable natural resources. Pure Waters will continue collaborating with landowners, forestry professionals, researchers,



and funding partners to preserve the forests that help safeguard Seneca Lake for future generations.

HEMLOCK INITIATIVE BY THE NUMBERS

2025–2026 Highlights

- Comprehensive Landscape Management Plan completed
- **320** priority hemlock trees treated
- **8** treatment sites on private lands
- **\$77,000** additional Rose Family Foundation grant secured
- Partnership with private landowners and CC Environment & Planning
- Biological controls showing encouraging progress in New York
- Protecting forests that reduce erosion and improve water quality

Donors in Fiscal Year 2025-2026

Throughout this report, we have emphasized that protecting Seneca Lake depends on stewardship—informed citizens, dedicated volunteers, committed partners, and generous financial supporters working together toward a common purpose. We are deeply grateful to everyone who contributes to this mission. The following section recognizes those individuals, families, businesses, foundations, and organizations whose financial contributions of \$500 or more between June 1, 2025, and May 31, 2026, helped make this work possible.

\$10,000 and more

The Rose Family Foundation
Peggy Focarino and Bill Roege
Hobart and William Smith Colleges

\$5,000-\$9,999

Donald and Marge Kloeber
Fran and Sally Ward
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Seneca Lake Order of Brewers
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Seneca Lake PURE WATERS Association is here to
PRESERVE, PROTECT, AND PROMOTE
Seneca Lake water quality
for ALL who have the privilege of knowing it.

As a non-profit organization, Pure Waters depends on
memberships and donations to build programs that work
to resolve the diverse set of threats that Seneca Lake
and its watershed residents face.

Learn more about what you can do to help.

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