

May 5-6

# 2023

Lake George, NY

Attending for MLA:  
Sara Warner &  
Mary Jo Watts

NY STATE  
FEDERATION  
OF LAKE  
ASSOCIATIONS

# NYSFOLA

## A Voice for New York Lakes

Founded in 1983, NYSFOLA is a not-for-profit coalition of 200+ lake associations, individuals, and corporate members dedicated to the protection and restoration of New York lakes.

### WHAT IS CSLAP?

The Citizens Statewide Lake Assessment Program, founded in 1985, is a volunteer lake monitoring program run by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation and NYSFOLA members. In 2023, 600+ citizen volunteers will conduct data on 191 sites across 176 lakes (up from last year's 400+ volunteers on 180 sites). There are new, streamlined protocols this year. Thanks to the MLA CSLAP volunteers, past and present, for collecting raw data, helping identify problems, and educating the public about conservation initiatives.



Photo: MJ Watts

## this issue

Traditional Eco Knowledge **P.1**

Conference Recap **P.2**

Go Wild With Conservation **P.3**

Resources **P.4**

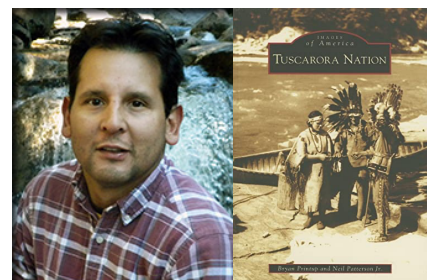
## Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK)

The opening plenary of NYSFOLA 2023 featured Neil Patterson, Jr., citizen of the Tuscarora Nation & Assistant Director of the Center for Native Peoples & the Environment at the SUNY College of Environmental Science & Forestry in Syracuse.

Professor Patterson's keynote provided an overview of his decades-long career dedicated to celebrating, restoring and building relationships between indigenous communities and their aboriginal territory. He discussed the pragmatic ways in which indigenous people have co-evolved within their landscapes, offering a living history and ongoing practice that provides a template for re-imagining and creating sustainable food, material, and energy systems for all beings on the planet. This talk complicated the term "invasive species" to remind us that all non-indigenous peoples are "invasive" and that the goal of our ecological efforts should not necessarily be the eradication of newcomers but the discovery of harmonious ways to coexist. Dr. Patterson also challenged standardized definitions of "data" and "scientific evidence," which disregard "traditional ecological knowledge" rooted in the creation story of "Turtle Island" and a familiarity with local animals and plants.

A contributor to the [White House Office of Science and Technology Policy \(OSTP\) on Indigenous Knowledge](#) (Nov 2022), Patterson advocates for the co-production of eco-knowledge and co-stewardship of organizations, along with the acknowledgment of the history of indigenous dispossession (land, language, fishing and hunting areas, rituals, medicine, and more).

Co-author of *Tuscarora Nation* and numerous articles, Patterson recommended Indigenous botanist Robin Wall Kimmerer's best-selling text *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*. These scholars share the belief that the development of an ecological consciousness requires the acknowledgment and celebration of our reciprocal relationship with the rest of the living world. We must hear the languages of other beings to understand the generosity of the earth, and learn to give our own gifts in return.



## Haudenosaunee Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK)

"We are thankful to our Mother, the Earth, for she gives us all that we need for life..." The Thanksgiving Address begins every formal gathering of the Haudenosaunee people. In it, the speaker and listeners acknowledge the critical importance of earth, sun, water, birds, fish, medicinal plants, and other natural phenomena, including people, and affirm a relationship of gratitude and obligation to them all. The Thanksgiving Address is foundational to traditional ecological knowledge. Let us lead with gratitude.

## 2023 Tear of the Clouds Award

NYSFOLA's award ceremony is a kind of thanksgiving address for lake stewards who care for our resources. This year's highest honor, Tear of the Clouds, named for the highest lake in NYS, went to DEC Conservation Dam Safety Section Chief, Alon Dominitz. One of the first people Alon recognized was Bob Rosati. Bob is NYSFOLA's most decorated lake steward in the org's 40 year history, and we didn't turn a corner without folks asking about and praising him. Thank you, Bob, for all you continue to do!



There were 18 sessions, many of them concurrent. Here's a recap of the sessions we attended and found most relevant to MLA members. The [complete program is available here](#). Presentations soon will be archived.

**A1: Making Media Work for You** (Sara) included tips and strategies for using technology and social media to tell lake association stories, archive histories, educate members, promote collectivity, and foster best practices. Bob produces a detailed newsletter (he won 1st place AGAIN this year in our category!), and we have both a website and at least three active Facebook pages (one official, one general & one environmental). Additional things to consider: record interviews with members, including elders, and post these to a password-protected section of the website; create an online portal for folks to upload historical photos and tell the story of their cottage; install nature cams. We could also offer a video option for association meetings, which is helpful for those with mobility issues and people traveling.

**A3: Diet for a Small Lake** (MJ) is an annual session where Dr. Bill Harman (SUNY Oneonta), author of a recommended book with this title, answers questions. We learned that the white spots on the shells of our mystery snails indicate a calcium deficiency, which could catalyze a massive die off, creating a temporary, smelly mess (females give live birth to ~100 young each June, so the cycle would continue). Mystery snails have spread throughout the Great Lakes. We also learned that grass carp live much longer than initially thought, some more than 20 years.

## "Telling Your Lake's Story Through Science & Data"

NYSFOLA 2023: 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

**B2 and D2: Lake Management Efforts** (Sara) these consecutive sessions featured 3-4 teams talking about their lake management plans – what they include, how they formulated them, how they administer them, and how they fund their initiatives. Most began in response to crises (HABs, run-off, invasives, property devaluation, AirBnBs, etc.). Seneca Lake has an impressive, well-funded program that offers easy to apply for grants to farmers to buffer agricultural run-off.

**B3: Programs & Partnerships for Clean Water** (MJ) recognized the need to prioritize TEK and forge true partnerships with their surrounding communities. Weekenders can seem like invasive species to locals who live in lake towns year-round. The main threats to small lakes are agricultural and road run-off, leaky septic systems, and "invasive" species.

**C3: DEC Programs & Partnerships for Clean Water** (Sara & MJ) admittedly flew over our heads with the rapid fire data sets and scientific jargon. Key takeaways: we could [regrade our roads](#) to tilt run-off toward ditches and re-open ditches that have been filled in or clogged.

**D1: Aquatic Plants in Lake Ecosystems** (MJ) was anchored by DEC retiree Scott A. Kishbaugh's overview of a century of water health surveys, accompanied by his critique of their methods and suggested improvements going forward.

**E1: Water in the Watershed** (MJ & Sara) featured a range of response plans to storm water management and long-term climate impacts.



NYS is working on a series of new data sheets, modeled after a program in Vermont. These were not ready in time for NYSFOLA (and are not yet available online), so the session presenters simply shared the Vermont documents, which are fantastic. Here are links to three relevant to MLA:

1. [Shoreline Best Management Practices](#)
2. [Lakeshore Buffers](#)
3. [Restoring Natural & Native Plant Communities](#)

Links will take you to additional docs.

One thing we can all do to help protect the lake is to let a portion of our lawns go wild. Lawns cause run-off, erosion, land loss, increased phosphorus levels, and danger to animals. Buffers protect against storms and ice damage. NYSFOLA conservationists recommend a minimum of 15 feet (from shore inland) and 100-300 square feet for those with larger lots. That's less grass to mow; more time for fishing and campfires!

Allocating part of the shoreline to a wild area creates habitats for animals. Native plantings are always best for shoreline buffers.

Buffer plants shouldn't need any fertilizer (phosphorous). Effective barrier zones include 3 layers: ground cover (ferns, grasses), woody shrubs (dogwood, ninebark), and canopied trees (oaks, maples, hemlock).

You can maintain your views of our beautiful lake by using plot maps to position taller trees and by pruning limbs as they sprout (but wait until the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> growing season to ensure the health of the trees).

Fench drains helps with run-off, as do ditches. Grading the road to pitch toward them will ease flooding.

## DEC

### Buffer in a Bag Program – Free!

This year, Sara & Mary Jo were selected by the DEC to participate in the Annual Trees for Tribes Buffer in a Bag Program. Anyone with 50+ feet of shoreline is eligible. There's an online application (see the link in the Resource Section at the end of the newsletter) that asks for photos and a property map showing the proposed planting location. You must also agree to send a photo of the installed plantings. Selected participants receive a bag of 25 tree and shrub seedlings for installing near streams, rivers, or lakes to help stabilize banks, protect water quality, combat climate change, and improve wildlife habitat.

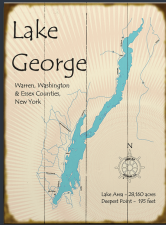


## Installing Our Buffer in Bag Bounty



This year's Buffer in a Bag included red oak, wetland rose, pussy willow, dogwood, and ninebark saplings, 5 of each, along with suggested layouts and a planting instruction manual. We're happy to report that all but 2 of the plantings have rooted and are growing. We're eager to share our application materials with anyone who wants to apply.

# Lake George



## Resources

- **CSLAP**
  - [CSLAP Website](#) and [Training Videos and Sampling Forms](#)
  - [Report and Monitor HABs on the Interactive Dashboard](#)
  - [2022 Melody Lake Report Card](#)
- **Invasive Species**
  - [Invasive Species Locator Map: DEC](#)
  - [NYS Invasive Species Mapping Project](#)
- **Harmful Algal Blooms**
  - [HAB Photo Identification Site](#)
  - [DEC HAB Research Guide](#)
- **Citizen Science (iNaturalist)**
  - <https://www.inaturalist.org>
- **DEC's Annual Buffer in a Bag Program**
  - [Annual Program Offering Free Saplings to Combat Shore Erosion](#)

NYSFOLA 2023 Report :: Sara Warner & Mary Jo Watts

## Land Acknowledgement

NYSFOLA President Tarki Heath (Song Lake) continued NYSFOLA's new tradition of a land acknowledgment, recognizing the indigenous history of the conference location, Lake George, home to Fort William Henry, a pivotal site in the French and Indian War (1755-1763) of America's colonial period. We honor this tradition here.

**Melody Lake is located on the traditional homelands of the Gayogóhó:nq' Nation, members of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, sometimes called the Iroquois Confederacy, an alliance of six sovereign Nations with a historic and contemporary presence on this land. The Confederacy precedes the establishment of Cortland County, New York State, and the United States of America. We acknowledge the painful history of indigenous dispossession and honor the ongoing connection of the Haudenosaunee people, past and present, to this beautiful land and water.** To learn more, [click here](#).

