

Conservation/UW-EX Education Committee
Monday, October 13, 2025 Minutes
Oneida County Courthouse, County Board Room and Virtually by ZOOM

Committee Members: Chair Collette Sorgel, Linnaea Newman, Lenore Lopez, Chris Schultz, and Robb Jensen.

Others Present: Karl Jennrich, Michele Sadauskas, Stephanie Boismenu, Levi Rhody, Ted Rulseh, Kathleen Cooper, Beckie Gaskill, and Jessica Young. Jonna Jewell (and two other unidentified individuals) on Zoom.

1. Call to order and Chairperson's Announcements:

Chair Sorgel called the meeting to order at 1:01 p.m. The meeting was properly posted and handicapped accessible and ADA compliant.

2. Approve Agenda: A motion by Jensen/Newman to approve the October 13, 2025 Agenda. All ayes; motion carried.

3. Approve Minutes: A motion by Newman/Schultz to approve the minutes of September 4, 2025 as presented. All ayes; motion carried.

4. Dates/Location of Future Meetings:

This item was moved down on the agenda after item #15.

Monday, December 8, 2025 at 1:00 p.m. Oneida County Courthouse; County Board Room.

**The next meeting date remains tentative and will be finalized based on scheduling needs from UW-Extension and Land & Water Conservation for a November meeting.*

5. Public Comment:

This item was moved down on the agenda after item #7.

Kathleen Cooper (Pelican Township) addressed item #6, PFAS Update. Cooper expressed concern about PFAS contamination and urged the Committee to consider adding a future agenda item to revisit Oneida County's mining ordinance. She noted that a 2018 amendment to the ordinance allowed mining in areas zoned as 1A Forestry, which comprises approximately 95% of land in Pelican Township. Cooper emphasized the potential risks of compounding PFAS issues with heavy metal contamination from mining and advocated for restoring the ordinance to restrict mining to areas zoned for manufacturing. She also shared updates from the recent PFAS meeting in the Town of Stella, highlighting the ongoing challenges with contamination, limited funding for remediation, and the need for urgent legislative support.

Ted Rulseh, president of Oneida County Lakes and Rivers Association (OCLRA), addressed item #10. Speaking on behalf of OCLRA, he requested the inclusion of language in the Shoreland Protection Ordinance (SPO) to address clear-cutting within the access and viewing corridor.

6. PFAS Update:

Sadauskas will distribute links to two new informational resources on PFAS treatment utilizing light-based technology. One resource is a scientific research paper, and the other is a general article.

7. LWCD Up-Coming Events:

- A County Conservationist meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 15, and Thursday, October 16.
- Boismenu will support the Global Science class in Three Lakes on Thursday, October 16, leading activities for the Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) and water monitoring field day.

8. 2026 Budget Update:

The budget has been reviewed and approved by the Executive Committee and will move on to the full County Board. No changes or updates were proposed.

9. Cost Share Projects:

a. 2026 Project Approvals

Sadauskas presented a series of proposed conservation projects for the upcoming year and requested Committee approval to proceed.

- 01 Town of Schoepke Culvert/Stream Crossing:
Significant erosion and a deteriorating culvert were noted.
- 02 Washburn Lake – Johnson:
Led by Boismenu, this site features a heavily eroded shoreline with minimal vegetation.
- 03 Romsa – Pelican Lake:
A planting buffer will be added to enhance shoreline protection. Property owners are supportive and aim to serve as role models for native buffer implementation.
- 04 Baguhn – Lake Nokomis:
An aging concrete block seawall will be removed and replaced with rock riprap with plantings behind.

Committee approval was requested to move forward with these projects, and Sadauskas committed to providing updates as work progresses. All projects are funded and covered by the budget.

Lopez contributed that an article from Minnesota stated that riprap was actually damaging to lakes. Sadauskas provided additional context, emphasizing a preference for vegetative solutions over hard armoring. When rock riprap is

necessary, efforts are made to incorporate vegetation to enhance ecological benefits. However, on flowages with fluctuating water levels, vegetative riprap is assessed on a case-by-case basis due to variable conditions. Sadauskas also noted that hard armoring is not the default recommendation; alternative solutions are explored first, and in many cases, natural shoreline conditions are deemed acceptable without intervention.

Schultz/Lopez made a motion to approve the projects as presented. All ayes; motion carried.

b. 2025 Project Completion:

- i. Town of Newbold Culvert/Stream Crossing: The undersized culvert was replaced due to severe deterioration. The area was replanted with annual rye and a pollinator mix.
- ii. Wendt – Wisconsin River: The bank was collapsing with ongoing land loss due to erosion. Installed 100 feet of rock riprap and six root wads angled upstream to stabilize the shoreline, provide habitat, and protect against ice.
- iii. Bur – Rhinelander Flowage: Installed a soil-filled bag wall to create a more natural, vegetated shoreline. Planted native vegetation in front of the property and seeded with no-mow grass and a pollinator bee lawn mix.

10. Shoreland Protection Ordinance 9.95, 9.97, and Article 10:

a. Landscaping in the access and viewing corridor.

P&D has proposed including 'landscaping', defined as the improvement of land appearance through planting trees, shrubs, or grasses, or by altering ground contours in the SPO. Sadauskas expressed concern that this definition is overly subjective and broad, potentially allowing for extensive land disturbance, including the use of bulldozers. This ambiguity has led to increased discussion around the need for clearer guidelines.

b. Removal of trees and shrubs in the access and viewing corridor.

Ted Rulseh provided background on past efforts made to introduce language into the Shoreland Protection Ordinance aimed at preventing clear cutting within the access and viewing corridor. The initiative was prompted by an incident in which a property with 200 feet of shoreline frontage on Two Sisters Lake was cleared within the regulation percentage, and the end result was unappealing, which raised some concerns.

Despite concerns, the proposed prohibition on clear cutting was not included in the final version of the ordinance. OCLRA is advocating for the inclusion of such language and believe this represents a significant gap in the ordinance and maintains that clear cutting should not be permitted in that zone. They acknowledge that adding language that is both practical and enforceable is a challenge, but it is not a good reason to avoid adding it.

Jensen raised concerns about enforcement, noting the difficulty in monitoring individual viewing corridors. He shared that in Crescent, the approach has been to educate property owners on the importance of preserving vegetation. Rulseh agreed that education is valuable but insufficient on its own to protect shorelines.

Jensen further stated that passing a resolution without enforcement capability may be ineffective. Newman countered that ordinance language serves not only as a regulatory tool but also as a standard and educational resource for property owners. Rulseh supported this view, emphasizing that most people want to do the right thing when they understand what that entails.

Schultz suggested educating realtors, who are often the first point of contact for property buyers and currently lack sufficient information. He proposed presentations at realtor association meetings. Rulseh agreed, noting that realtors have a vested interest in shoreline protection as it keeps home values up. Newman suggested that ordinance language would provide them with clear guidelines that they can share with clients. It was also suggested that landscapers be included in local educational efforts.

Sadauskas noted that previous attempts to include clear cutting language did not advance beyond the Planning & Development Committee, which believed such provisions might conflict with DNR statutes. However, multiple other counties have successfully implemented clear prohibitions.

Sadauskas presented two options for potential ordinance language. Option 3a allows select removal of trees and prohibits cutting trees larger than 4 inches diameter breast height. Option 3b includes the same provisions as option 3a, with an additional clause prohibiting landscaping activities involving filling, grading, and other land-disturbing actions.

Newman/Lopez made a motion to retain 3b of the possible reiterations, the language in yellow will be kept and the language in green will be removed. All ayes; motion carried.

11. Grant Training Seminar Wrap Up:

Newman emphasized the importance of having access to information and resources that support grant writing and acquisition. In today's economic climate – where budgets

are tight and costs are rising – grants play a vital role in preserving the region’s quality of life.

12. Lake District Reports:

Squash Lake District had their fall meeting on October 12, 2025 and have removed 9 tons of Eurasian milfoil out of the lake. This is 3 tons more than last year’s count. The new dive boat is helping greatly. Each diver needs three nets, as they can fill three nets on one tank of oxygen. The divers are excited to get out on the lake to remove even more.

13. LWCD Office Reports: – September, 2025.

- a. Budget Actual.
- b. Invoices Paid.

14. LWCD items to include on next agenda:

- DNR’s response to Shoreline Protection Ordinance, if available.

15. Public Comment:

Kathleen Cooper of Pelican Township from Oneida County Clean Water Action voiced support for the changes to the Shoreline Protection Ordinance on clear-cutting. Some of these issues are non-enforceable, yet most people want to do the right thing, which is why prohibitive language should be included in the ordinance.

16. Adjournment: Chair Sorgel adjourned the meeting at 2:26 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jessica Young, Recording Secretary