

Chautauqua Watershed Notes
From the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy
For July 26, 2009

Natural Shorelines Provide Valuable Functions
By John Jablonski III, Executive Director, CW



**A Chautauqua Institution property providing good habitat for insects, which help control aquatic plants
Photo by John Jablonski/CWC**

The Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy has led efforts to conserve over 1.8 miles of Chautauqua Lake and Lake Outlet shoreline over the past 12 years. We have been fortunate that Chautauqua Lake shoreline has been listed as a Statewide Priority Conservation Project since 1992 in the subsequent and current New York State Open Space Conservation Plans. With this statewide listing and strong public and foundation support, the CWC has conserved 80 acres of wetlands along the Chautauqua Lake Outlet, 16 acres at the Lake Chautauqua Lutheran Center, five acres at Prendergast Point and five acres along Ball Creek. The CWC has facilitated the conservation of 36 acres of land at the Cheney farm in Ellery and 19 acres of land at the Stow Farm in North Harmony by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

Why is it so important to conserve natural shoreline (riparian) sites? With each year, more and more research shows that undisturbed natural shorelines provide multiple values toward healthy lakes and fish and wildlife populations. The land-water transition zone is one of the most biologically diverse and productive areas found in our region. These areas act as incubators, nurseries and cafeterias for a variety of terrestrial and aquatic species. Deep-rooted trees and

shrubs anchor the shoreline from the erosive forces of waves and ice. These plants grasp and hold the soil in place. The roots also absorb nutrients and pollutants from surface and ground water traveling to the lake, reducing algae blooms and excessive plant growth in the lake.

Most recently, Robert Johnson of the Cornell Research Ponds reported on his research finding that natural shoreline vegetation provides essential habitat for a variety of insects that provide the beneficial function of controlling the growth of Eurasian watermilfoil and other plant species that can choke local lake waters. These insects actually eat these plants and in many cases prevent them from growing to the surface. This affirms earlier research by Janis Bowman and Chris Ecker of Jamestown Community College showing much more healthy and diverse populations of insects and other macroinvertebrates in the lake in front of natural shorelines versus those with lawns and breakwalls.

Naturally-vegetated stream banks are just as important to the lake's tributaries. The tree and shrub roots in small streams actually filter nutrients from them, helping deliver cleaner water to our lake. To learn more about the importance of streamside and lakeside riparian buffers, please attend the Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy Annual Meeting on Sunday, August 2, at Webb's. The program will feature Jerry V. Mead, Ph.D., Section Leader, Watershed and Systems Ecology Section, Academy of Natural Sciences. The importance of lakeshore and streamside habitats to healthy waters will be the topic of Dr. Mead's lecture. Dr. Mead is part of the team preparing the Chautauqua Lake Watershed Management Plan and investigating erosion and sedimentation issues on Dewittville and Crescent Creeks on behalf of the Chautauqua Lake Management Commission.

CWC members as well as the general public are invited to attend the annual meeting at a cost of \$40 per person for a delicious buffet style dinner. The event begins with a 5:00 pm reception of hors d'oeuvres and cash bar, followed by a business meeting at 5:30 pm where CWC leaders will provide an update on recent accomplishments and current conservation activities including watershed landscaping programs and proposed waterfront conservation projects at Goose Creek and Wells Bay on Chautauqua Lake. Dinner is scheduled for 6:30 pm with Dr. Mead to speak at 7:00 pm. To make a reservation, please send a check payable to the CWC at 413 Main Street, Jamestown, NY 14701 no later than 5:00 pm Monday, July 27th. For more information please call 664-2166.

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The Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy is a local, private not-for-profit organization supported primarily by membership donations and grants from private foundations. Its mission is to preserve and enhance the water quality, scenic beauty and ecological health of the lakes, streams and watersheds of the Chautauqua region. It is the only locally-based not-for-profit organization actively conserving important habitats, scenic sites and watershed lands in the county. It takes a preventive approach to address lake algae and plant problems. For a list of upcoming events go to chautauquawatershed.org. or call 664-2166.

Photo caption:

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