



Natural Resource Protection News

From the Town of Canandaigua Environmental Conservation Board

Protecting and Enhancing the Natural Capital of Canandaigua Lake

By Kevin Olvany

Watershed Manager,

Canandaigua Lake Watershed Council

With extreme storms becoming more frequent, the ability of the land around Canandaigua Lake to be able to slow and filter runoff from heavy rains is critical to the long-term health of the lake and reducing the impacts of flooding.

High-quality land areas such as stream buffers, wetlands, floodplains and forests can provide an amazing amount of benefits to the Town and its residents by protecting water quality and reducing downstream flooding. We call these critical land areas the community's Natural Capital because of the wide array of benefits these areas provide. The Town of Canandaigua, in partnership with the Watershed Council and others, has made protecting and enhancing our Natural Capital a high priority in order to adapt to these more intense weather events.

Extreme Storm Events

Numerous researchers at the federal, state and academic levels have documented that more extreme rain events are occurring on a more frequent basis.

A study led by Dartmouth College found a 53 percent increase in precipitation events of two inches or greater and The Third National Climate Assessment report has estimated a 71 percent increase in the amount of precipitation that falls in the heaviest one percent of daily precipitation events. Our local experiences over the last decade correlate very well with these scientific assessments.

Our Natural Capital

Land areas such as wetlands, forested areas, stream buffers and floodplains are considered to have a high Natural Capital value because they help temporarily store and treat stormwater runoff throughout our Town during storm



events. These high Natural Capital areas provide a diversity of benefits to our entire community, such as:

- > Protect Canandaigua Lake as a high-quality drinking water supply for 70,000 people and as a major regional recreation and tourism destination
- > Reduce flooding and related damages to both Town roads and private residences
- > High lake quality helps to maintain high real estate values that reduce the overall tax rates

Several studies have estimated that our region has lost over 50 percent of our original wetland acreage to land development and agriculture. Land development and agriculture are vital to the overall health of our community and need to be promoted. However, with the increasing frequency of extreme storm events, we also need to find ways to restore the Natural Capital that we have

lost over the years in order to protect Canandaigua Lake and build our resiliency to extreme storm events.

Recognizing the importance of Natural Capital to the Town's future, the Town is partnering with the Watershed Council, landowners and the City of Canandaigua to restore wetland systems in multiple locations along Sucker Brook to help reduce the impacts of flooding and pollutant loading.

The Town has also completed projects with landowners near Deuel Road to improve water quality and protect the road from washing out. The Town played a critical role in building a two-acre stormwater wetland above the Primary/Elementary School to stop the flooding of 17 classrooms during major storm events.

The Town has several work groups which continue to identify high priority areas that will further build our Natural Capital in order to adapt to this new normal of extreme weather.

Survey Seeks Comments on Canandaigua's Open Spaces

Share your thoughts by completing a brief survey which will help the Town's Open Space and Conservation Master Plan Team in the development of strategies to protect natural resources, scenic views and critical open space as part of the Town's *Open Space, Conservation and Scenic Views Master Plan*. Town residents who complete the survey will be entered into a drawing for a **\$50 Wegmans gift card**. The survey is available online at:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CanandaiguaOpenSpacePublicSurvey>