



onondaga creek

CONCEPTUAL REVITALIZATION PLAN

PROJECT SUMMARY

PROJECT GOAL

The goal of the Onondaga Creek Conceptual Revitalization Plan (OCRP) project is to develop a community-based revitalization plan for the Onondaga Creek watershed, providing a guide for future development, water quality, and habitat improvements that can enhance social and economic conditions along Onondaga Creek.

THE WORKING GROUP

The Onondaga Creek Working Group will develop the conceptual revitalization plan for Onondaga Creek. They are a diverse group of volunteers who live or work in the Onondaga Creek watershed. Members are from Syracuse, Nedrow, the Onondaga Nation, LaFayette and Tully.

The Working Group meets at 5:30 p.m. on the first Wednesday of each month. Meetings are open to the public. For a meeting schedule and location please visit www.esf.edu/onondagacreek.

THE PROJECT TEAM

The Project Team is responsible for facilitating the Working Group, community forums, and stakeholder meetings, public education events, and the creation of various informational documents. The following organizations work together to assist the OCRP Project:

- Atlantic States Legal Foundation (ASLF)
- Canopy
- City of Syracuse
- Cornell University Cooperative Extension of Onondaga County (CCE)
- Onondaga Environmental Institute (OEI)
- State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry (SUNY ESF)

PROJECT COMPONENTS

Working Group Meetings – Facilitated by Dr. Rick Smardon, SUNY ESF

Public Education Programs – Facilitated by SUNY ESF & CCE

Purpose: To raise public awareness, and encourage public involvement, for Onondaga Creek watershed issues and the OCRP project.

Community Forums and Stakeholder Meetings – Facilitated by SUNY ESF & OEI

Purpose: To provide opportunity for community input concerning visions for creek restoration. This input will be used in the development of the OCRP. A summary report will be available to the public.

Information Reports about Onondaga Creek – Facilitated by OEI & ASLF

Purpose: To provide the technical documents to guide the formation the OCRP, including conceptual restoration alternatives and case studies, an applicable government and regulatory jurisdictional guide, a summary of the state of Onondaga Creek, and a directory of relevant information. All reports will be available to the public.

The Onondaga Creek Conceptual Revitalization Plan – Facilitated by the Working Group

The plan is expected to be developed by mid-2007, and will be made available for public comment. The Onondaga Lake Partnership (OLP) may choose to incorporate the conceptual plan for the revitalization of Onondaga Creek into the overall management plan for Onondaga Lake.

PROJECT FUNDING

The Onondaga Lake Partnership (OLP) sponsors the OCRP project with funds from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA).



ABOUT ONONDAGA CREEK

- Approximately 35% of the water in Onondaga Lake comes from Onondaga Creek.
- Onondaga Creek begins 18 miles south of Syracuse, in the hills of Tully.
- The creek flows a total of nine miles through the City of Syracuse.
- Three issues that affect everyone along the length of the creek:
 - Impaired water quality
 - Altered natural habitat
 - Restricted public access to the creek
- History:
 - Sewage has been a problem in the creek since the early 1800s.
 - Straightening of the creek began in 1855 in order to increase the flow rate and flush out sewage more quickly.
 - Flooding became a problem as more people settled in the creek's floodplain and deforestation occurred upstream. The creek was further channelized to reduce flooding. Creek straightening and channelizing projects continued well into the 1960s.
 - Channelization resulted in swift currents with steep sides. The creek was infamous for drownings. A chain link fence was first proposed in 1962 to keep the public away from the "Killer Creek".
- Polluted runoff, sedimentation from landslides and the Tully mudboils, and a lack of public access to the creek, are issues for the creek's rural headwaters.

WHY DO SOMETHING NOW?

Increased environmental awareness has renewed public interest in Onondaga Creek.

- Onondaga Creek Cleanups organized by Cornell Cooperative Extension began in 2002, hauling two to three dumpsters worth of trash out of the creek each year.
- Onondaga Creek Festivals were held in 2004 and 2005, increasing community awareness and celebrating the hidden promise of the creek.
- The City of Syracuse is currently constructing a Creekwalk from Armory Square to Onondaga Lake.
- Stream bank stabilization and mudboil control projects have reduced sediment loads in the southern stream reaches.

Technology and understanding of the environment has improved significantly since the 1960s.

Innovative solutions to creek problems now exist. Many cities around the country have "rediscovered" their streams, undergone revitalizations, and are enjoying the economic and ecological benefits of doing so. We can learn from examples like Denver's South Platte River, San Antonio's River Walk, and Illinois' Des Plaines River. **If they can do it, so can Syracuse!**

Onondaga Creek has a bad reputation, but it's not a lost cause.

The creek has been chained up, abused, and neglected... treated as a drainage ditch. But with attention, care, and creative planning from the community, it could be restored to a healthy, functioning creek that people want to visit, and enjoy.