

# ONONDAGA LAKE

2016/2017

## Lake Cleanup Progress

- ✓ Lake dredging finished in November 2014, a year ahead of schedule; capping completed in December 2016
- ✓ 475 acres of lake bottom capped with more than 3 million cubic yards of material consisting primarily of sand, activated carbon, and stone
- ✓ To date, 74 acres of wetlands created or enhanced and nearly 600,000 native plants, trees, and shrubs now provide diverse habitat for more than 230 wildlife species
- ✓ Geddes Brook, LCP wetlands, and Nine Mile Creek remediated and restored, creating a green corridor from the lake to upland areas
- ✓ Water quality in the northern two-thirds of Onondaga Lake has achieved public health criteria for swimming (Source: DOH)
- ✓ 65 species of fish documented, up from nine to 12 counted in 1970s (Source: DEC)
- ✓ Aquatic plant community expanded from less than 12 percent of shallow-water lake areas to about 80 percent (Source: SUNY-ESF)
- ✓ Methylmercury, the form of mercury that accumulates in fish and organisms, in deep-water portions decreased 98 percent since 2009 (Source: Upstate Freshwater Institute)
- ✓ Cleanup is progressing as expected (Source: EPA)
  - Concentrations of dissolved mercury are significantly lower in surface water samples.
  - Levels of methylmercury have declined dramatically in both lake water and zooplankton. The decline is expected to contribute to lower mercury concentrations in fish.
  - Natural recovery in the lake is progressing faster than predicted.

## Onondaga Lake Dredging and Capping Completed; Community's Vision of a Clean Onondaga Lake is Becoming a Reality

Honeywell has completed the dredging and capping of Onondaga Lake. The result of more than two decades and millions of hours of intensive effort, the project was completed through an unwavering focus on sound science, technical excellence, collaboration, community engagement, health and safety, and sustainable practices. Habitat restoration, a major focus of the cleanup, continues in 2017, as does Honeywell's commitment to encouraging community volunteers to become environmental stewards. Honeywell will implement a maintenance and monitoring program approved by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to ensure the long-term effectiveness of the remedy.



Onondaga Lake is now becoming a source of pride and optimism for local residents and an economic driver



for the region, thanks to the extraordinary efforts of state and federal regulators, Honeywell, educational institutions, elected officials, Onondaga County, and the community. In July 2016, thousands of people attended the inaugural Onondaga Cup and Lakefest, including New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo.

Working under the supervision of DEC and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Honeywell worked with national and local experts, including the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry (SUNY-ESF), Syracuse University, and local nonprofit organizations and community groups.

In November 2015, Honeywell received Audubon New York's 2015 Thomas W. Keesee, Jr. Conservation Award for its leadership on the cleanup and restoration of Onondaga Lake. The award honors those in New York State who have shown remarkable leadership and commitment "to Audubon's mission to conserve and restore natural ecosystems."

Honeywell engaged the community through scores of presentations and meetings, and incorporated public comments into the planning and design. The Onondaga Lake Visitors Center, built and operated by Honeywell, offers the public up-to-date information on all activities. The Onondaga Lake Conservation Corps, founded by Montezuma Audubon Center, Onondaga Audubon Society, and Honeywell, has inspired hundreds of community volunteers to contribute to restoration projects that are creating or improving wildlife habitat in the Onondaga Lake watershed.

The cleanup, together with upgrades made by Onondaga County to its wastewater treatment plant and the county's Save the Rain program, has resulted in the best water quality in more than 100 years.

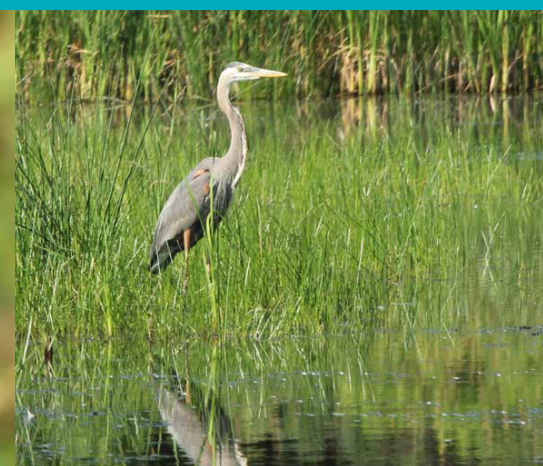


**"The lake is back... faster than anyone predicted. It's a story of renewal and rebirth, and an optimism about that rebirth that nobody expected."**

— Governor Andrew Cuomo (after his team won a canoe race at the Onondaga Cup and Lakefest)

**"We grew up here, and it is absolutely unbelievable and amazing that in our lifetimes we are seeing this lake returned to the community as an asset."**

— Sue and Steve Koegel, Westvale





## Habitat Improvements Creating a Sustainable Future for Onondaga Lake

*“Honeywell made a corporate commitment to the ecosystem of Central New York with the restoration of Onondaga Lake, a vital natural resource and Audubon Important Bird Area. Thanks to ongoing restoration, birds and other wildlife are once again thriving along its shores and watershed.”*

— Audubon New York Executive Director Erin Crotty

Working with local habitat and conservation groups, and under the supervision of DEC, Honeywell is creating a sustainable future for habitats in and around

Onondaga Lake. On the shores of Onondaga Lake and along its tributaries, Honeywell is improving wetlands and planting about 1.1 million native plants, shrubs, and trees. Additional shoreline plantings and habitat restoration continue in spring 2017. Plant lists are available at [lakecleanup.com](http://lakecleanup.com).

## Health and Safety: A Top Priority

A culture of safety was promoted throughout the entire cleanup. Health and safety measures were incorporated at every level of planning and operations to protect worker and public health. An experienced team of engineers, health, and safety professionals; construction managers; and quality-control personnel collaborated throughout the project.

A Community Health and Safety Plan was reviewed by the New York State Department of Health (DOH) and approved by DEC. The careful planning and daily commitment to a safe workplace resulted in an industry-leading safety record.



During the first four years of the project, more than 1.9 million worker hours were completed. Hundreds of dedicated and talented Central New Yorkers achieved a safety record 80 percent better than industry standards. In 2014, the Western Dredging Association awarded the Onondaga Lake cleanup team with its annual safety award for the project's outstanding safety record and performance.



## Native Vegetation Studied at Consolidation Area to Enhance Habitat

Construction of the cover system for the consolidation area, which holds material removed from the lake, is substantially complete. Grass is being planted over the entire area. Honeywell is working in cooperation with local environmental and wildlife stakeholders to explore innovative ways to enhance the traditional vegetated landfill cover. Experts at SUNY-ESF and Audubon provided critical input on selection of perennial native grasses and vegetation, as well as best management practices to foster sustainability. The approximately 50 acres will become a link to other habitat restoration areas in the Onondaga Lake watershed, maximizing habitat conditions for birds and other wildlife.

### CLEANUP BY THE NUMBERS: PROJECT TOTALS

Number of Workers	500+ Central New Yorkers
Worker Hours (6/2012 – 6/2016)	1.9 million+ hours
Public Meetings, Presentations, & Tours	1,200+
Lake Material Removed	2.2 million cubic yards
Cap Material Placed	3.10 million cubic yards
Total Wetland Improvements	87 acres
Total Native Plantings	1.1 million plants, shrubs, and trees



## For More Information and To Stay Involved

### Onondaga Lake Conservation Corps

Founded to inspire future environmental stewards, this hands-on, experience-based program offers citizens and organizations the opportunity to participate in activities that help restore and sustain the Onondaga Lake watershed.

To learn more or to participate in future activities, please contact [montezuma@audubon.org](mailto:montezuma@audubon.org) or call 315-365-3588. Schools, community groups, local organizations, and individuals are welcome. Like the Corps on Facebook or visit YouTube to learn more.

### Onondaga Lake Visitors Center

To learn more about the Onondaga Lake cleanup, visit the Onondaga Lake Visitors Center. For more information or to book a group tour, please call 315-552-9751 or visit [lakecleanup.com](http://lakecleanup.com). There is no fee to visit the center.

### Schedule a Presentation

If your group would like to schedule a presentation about the Onondaga Lake cleanup, please call 315-552-9751.

