

# Celebrating Success: Onondaga Lake Superfund Site Syracuse, New York



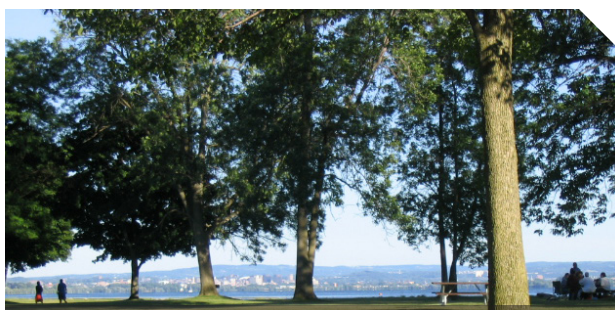
Superfund  
Redevelopment  
Initiative



View of Onondaga Lake with the Syracuse skyline in the background. (Source: Hotshotfox / CC BY-SA 3.0)

*“This is a game-changer for the western side of Onondaga Lake.”*

- Ryan McMahon, Onondaga Legislature Chairman



View of Onondaga Lake from the Onondaga Lake Park. (Source: Public Domain)

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Syracuse, New York, with Onondaga Lake in the background. (Source: John Marino / CC BY 2.0)

The Onondaga Lake Superfund site (the Site) in Syracuse, New York, is now home to a new amphitheater, a restored lake and a network of trails. These reuses are providing the community with significant economic, recreational and ecological benefits.

Onondaga Lake covers about 4.6 square miles and, in addition to Syracuse, borders the towns of Geddes and Salina and two villages – Solvay and Liverpool. The Site includes the lake and its tributaries as well as upland sources of contamination. Beginning in the early 1800s, industrial waste and municipal sewage flowed into Onondaga Lake. The State of New York banned swimming in 1940 and fishing in 1970. In 1986, the fishing ban ended; however, New York State issued a fish advisory for consumption of fish. Since then, the State has periodically updated the advisory. EPA added the Site to the Superfund program’s National Priorities List (NPL) in December 1994.

Under oversight by New York State and EPA, potentially responsible parties (PRPs) initiated cleanup activities in 1999. Activities included industrial building demolition, and removal and treatment of contaminated soil and sediment. Cleanup of upland areas has made commercial development possible at several properties as well as allowed for the expansion of municipal wastewater treatment facilities. The remedy for these areas included hydraulic control and treatment of contaminated groundwater as well as wetlands restoration. The parties dredged contaminated channels and creek and tributary floodplains.

Before cleanup, there were only 12 species of fish in Lake Onondaga’s contaminated waters. Now, there are over 65 species of fish there, including bass, perch, sunfish and bluegill. Area residents use the lake for fishing and enjoy an expanded network of walking and biking trails that extend around its edges.

In January 2014, governor Andrew Cuomo announced a \$100 million western shore revitalization plan for Onondaga Lake. It featured a lakefront amphitheater, revitalized state fairgrounds, a new park for recreational vehicles and extensive infrastructure improvements. Completed in late Summer 2015, Lakeview Amphitheater provides seating for over 17,500 attendees. The amphitheater’s opening concert in September 2015 attracted 10,000 people.