




American Academy of
Environmental Engineers
and Scientists (AAEES)
Symposium
October 10, 2019

Fostering Onondaga Lake Watershed Stewardship through Community-Based Restoration Projects

Chris Lajewski, Director of Montezuma Audubon Center



▶ **Primary location: Onondaga Lake,
Syracuse, NY – aerial view looking North**

Onondaga Lake History

Pollution from growing city and expanding industries

1940s: Lake was declared unsafe for swimming

1970s: Fishing was prohibited

1994: Listed as a Superfund site, due to mercury contamination of Lake's bottom



Onondaga Lake Cleanup



About 2.2 million cubic yards of material was removed



Approximately 475 acres of the Lake has been capped to provide a new habitat layer, prevent erosion, and isolate remaining contaminants



More than 1.1 million plants, trees, and shrubs are being planted, and 90 acres of wetlands enhanced



**Restoration and
Stewardship:
Onondaga Lake
Important
Bird Area**

Critical habitat for wintering
waterfowl and bald eagles
along the Atlantic flyway

Co-adopted by Montezuma
Audubon Center,
Onondaga Audubon Society,
and Honeywell

Establishment of the
of the Onondaga
Lake Conservation
Corps – Founders,
Current Sponsors

Honeywell



OBG



Montezuma Audubon
Center



Onondaga Audubon
Society



Parsons



Anchor QEA



Bond, Schoeneck & King



SUNY College of
Environmental Science
and Forestry



Habitat Gardening in
Central New York





The Onondaga Lake Conservation Corps (OLCC) is a hands-on, experienced-based organization of community volunteers participating in stewardship and education activities that help restore and sustain the Onondaga Lake watershed, ecosystem, and natural resources.

Mission Statement

ESTABLISHED IN 2012



Reaching Out to Involve the Public



ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY

- 783 volunteers have donated their time at various events
- 19 events have been offered for the public to attend
- Each event has been attended to capacity
- Volunteers come back to attend different types of events



EDUCATE THE COMMUNITY

- All events are staffed with scientists and specialists from the restoration projects
- A birding survey is always a part of every event
- An online curriculum is available for all educators*
- Students participate in hands-on activities and wetlands tours during field trips to Visitor Center*

Community Engagement

Planting: wetlands, native vegetation

Meeting the Scientists

Pulling invasive species

Guest speakers

Building habitats

Paddlefest

Photography exhibit

Birding







Assisted in the planting of more than 1.1 million native plants during the restoration process

Begin monitoring wetlands and areas around the Lake by collecting data to record organism population

Creating the next generation of stewards of Onondaga Lake

OLCC's Outcomes

STEWARDSHIP MODEL FOR OTHER WATERSHED GROUPS



OLCC Recognized in
2015 EPA's
Environmental
Champion Award



**OLCC Recognized in
2017 Article in
*National Audubon
Magazine***

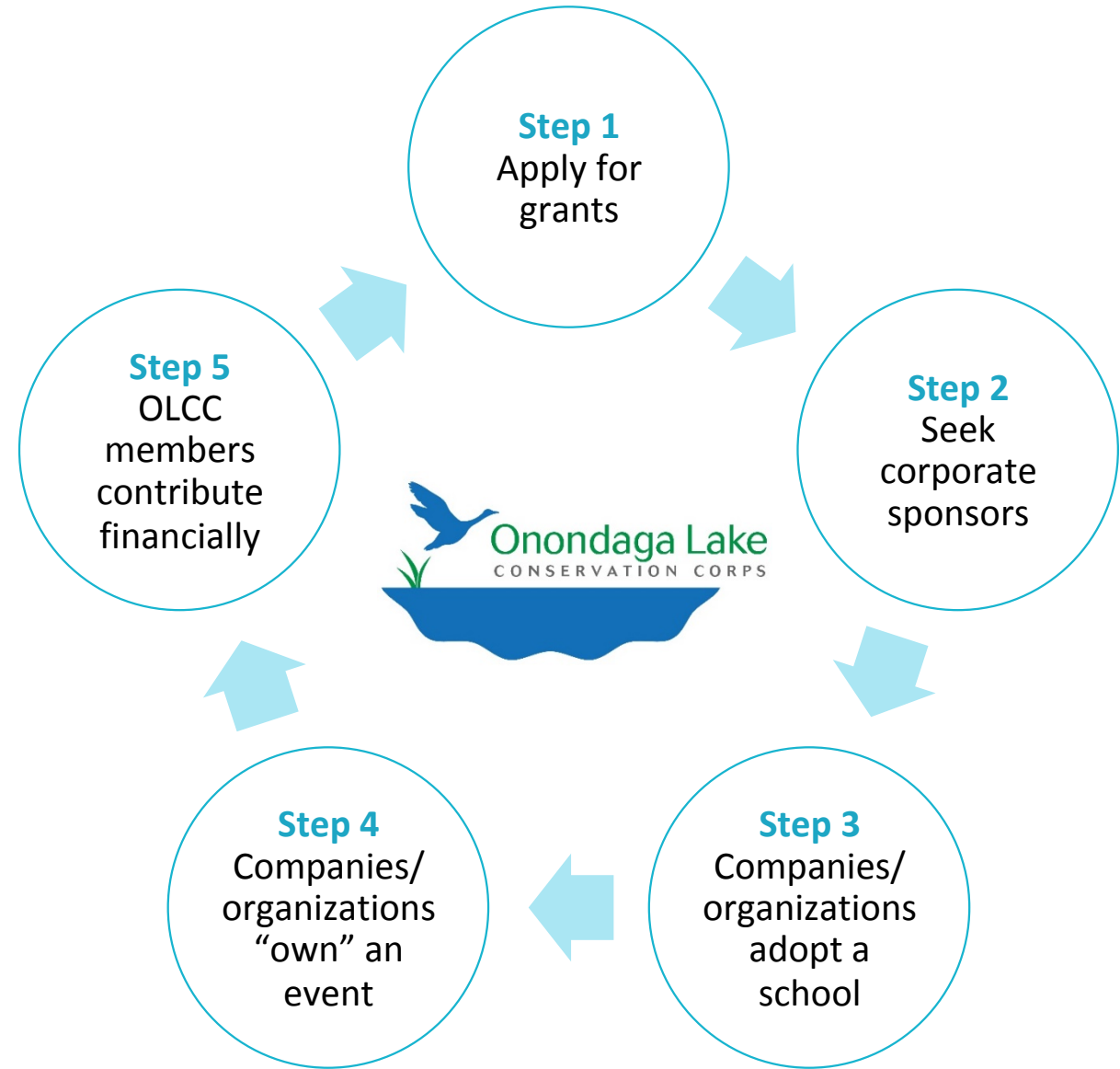


OLCC's Sustainability

Honeywell has been the major financial source for events

Grant money can assist but cannot totally fund programs or events

Need to be innovative in ways to support OLCC's mission





Questions?

www.lakecleanup.com/about-the-cleanup

www.audubon.org/OLCC

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OLCC

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