



Onondaga County Legislature

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Clerk

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Deputy Clerk

MICHAEL CUSANO – CHAIRMAN **MEETING MINUTES OF THE** **FISHERIES ADVISORY BOARD – APRIL 16, 2026**

MEMBERS PARTICIPATING: Michael Cusano, Les Monostory, Eric Stanczyk, Jason Howard,
ABSENT: Ken Crane, Brian Kelley, Bob Walczyk
GUESTS: Gary Lopez

Chairman Michael Cusano called the meeting to order at 5:35 P.M.

Old Business:

Cusano went over the minutes from our previous meeting on March 19, 2026.
Motion to accept the March, 2026 minutes. by Eric, seconded by Jason, and
Motion passed.

New Business:

Carpenter's Brook Fish Hatchery

Eric reported that stocking of approximately 70,000 trout in streams and lakes across Onondaga County is well underway, and will continue through mid-May. About 1,000 people attended a fishing program at Green Lakes State Park, hosted jointly by Onondaga County and NYS Parks Departments, plus the Town of Manlius and Village of Fayetteville.

The 2026 Spring Fishing Program at the Carpenter's Brook Fish Hatchery, running on Saturday mornings from April 4 to May 9, has been sold out. On Saturday, June 6, there will be a DEC sponsored fishing program at the County Hatchery, with no fishing license required.

Syracuse Parks Department Sponsored Fishing Events

Jason discussed a proposed Family Fun fishing event to be held at Hiawatha Lake in Syracuse in May or June. They are looking for assistance from NYSDEC. Another Hiawatha Lake fishing event is tentatively planned for October, similar to a successful event held there last October. Syracuse Parks Director Chris Abbott is checking into these events. Jason is also investigating dates to hold learn to fish programs for perhaps 15 inner city kids at the Carpenter's Brook Hatchery.

County Parks operations

The work on the Onondaga Lake Marina renovation is underway, but progress has been slowed due to high waters along the lake shore in early April. The Marina opening may be delayed until mid-June. Plans are still underway for construction of a new deep water stationary pier along the west shore of Onondaga Lake near Solvay, and new stationary docks adjacent to the Salt Museum are expected to be put in during April or May.

Proposed DEC Regulation Changes for Sport Fish.

Committee members, Les Monostory and Eric Stanczyk had both brought up a proposed NYS DEC regulation change that would reduce the walleye season by

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two weeks in March. Currently the season is open through March 15 th, and the proposal is to close it on March 1 st . At the March meeting of the Fisheries Advisory Board, the members decided to neither support nor oppose the proposed regulation change. They wanted to know why the NY DEC wasn't limiting the changes to focus on those waters that are experiencing poor recruitment/population issues. Les Monostory said that he participated in a ZOOM meeting with the NYS Conservation Council's Fish Committee that was attended by DEC Fisheries Program director Steve Hurst. The Committee members decided to go along with DEC's proposed regulation changes, but noted that the Department needed to provide more data on earlier spawning by walleyes , and the need to extend the closed season.

Cormorant Management

Mike brought up a bill introduced in Congress for development of a nationwide Cormorant Management program. Cormorant populations have grown substantially across the nation in recent decades, and pose a potential hazard to game fish populations in lakes and water bodies across New York and many other states.

New York State already has a cormorant control program in effect in Oneida Lake and eastern Lake Ontario, but Mike reports that based on his personal observations in Oneida Lake, large flocks of cormorants still inhabit the lake's surface waters. Cormorants are protected under migratory bird regulations overseen by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Declining Smallmouth Bass Populations in Oneida Lake

Bob Walczyk was not able to attend our April meeting, but the Spring issue of the Oneida Lake Bulletin had an extensive article on concerns raised by bass anglers over the past several fishing seasons about catching very few undersized Smallmouth Bass in Oneida Lake. The Spring issue reported on how NYSDEC, the Oneida Lake Association, and Cornell University have collaborated on understanding bass dynamics in Oneida Lake.

Cornell has collected fish populations in trawl nets for decades, and their data has shown generally increasing walleye and perch populations during the decade between 2015 and 2025, trends which have historically coincided with decreasing smallmouth bass populations. However, those trends in the lake's sport fish populations can vary over time, and both Cornell and DEC believe that based on all available evidence, Oneida Lake's bass populations do not appear to be headed for a crash.

Adjournment

The FAB meeting adjourned at 6:10 P.M. Next FAB meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 28, 2026 at 5:30 P.M. at the Onondaga County Parks office in Liverpool.

Minutes by Les Monostory, April 23, 2026.