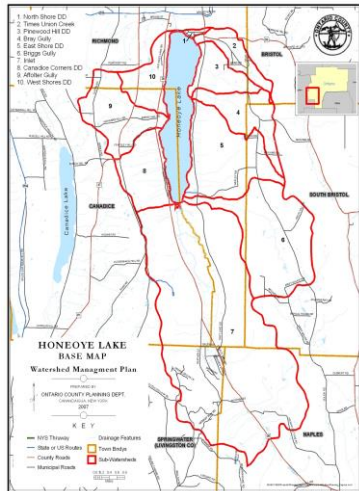




Honeoye Lake is the second smallest of the Finger Lakes at a mere 4.5 miles long, and ranks shallowest at only 30 feet deep. Yet, despite what could be argued as unimpressive attributes, Honeoye Lake possesses one of the Finger Lakes’ most remarkable natural features - the Honeoye Inlet.



The Honeoye Inlet sub watershed is Honeoye Lake’s largest sub watershed consisting of 11,293 acres directly south of Honeoye Lake and drains 43% of the lake’s watershed. Waters draining from this sub watershed are responsible for ~50% of the lake’s total external inflow nutrients and pollutants.

Originally, much of the Honeoye Inlet watershed belonged to the Wild Rose Ranch which was extensively farmed throughout the mid-1900s. To facilitate the farming of these lands, that portion of the Honeoye Inlet stream running through the Wild Rose Ranch was channelized and a number of drainage ditches were cut perpendicular to the stream to help dewater the adjacent wetlands. As a result of this “re-engineering”, excessive amounts of sediment and nutrients were forced to flow quickly to the inlet and into Honeoye Lake rather than flowing slowly across the natural wetlands to be absorbed before reaching the inlet channel. This gush of nutrients into Honeoye Lake brought with it fuel to accelerate aquatic plant growth and feed algae blooms. Starting in the late 1990’s, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) acquired the Wild Rose Ranch lands and in 2002, transferred its ownership to the State of New York. These nearly 2,500 acres subsequently became the New York State Department of Conservation (NYSDEC) managed Honeoye Inlet Wildlife Management Area and today, is best defined as successional fields.

The water quality and ecological “health” of a lake is largely dictated by the quality of runoff and inflow entering the lake from its watershed. In short, there is a direct proven relationship between the degree of lake eutrophication and the intensity of watershed development and disturbance. So, the logical conclusion is: if the amount of pollutant loading can be reduced, then the water quality of the lake should improve. Following this rationale, the Honeoye Lake Watershed Task Force (HLWTF) established a partnership with other stakeholders in an effort to restore the Honeoye Inlet to its original function of filtering out nutrients and sediments from watershed runoff before entering Honeoye Lake - and in doing so, launched The Honeoye Inlet Restoration Project.

The Nature Conservancy, the Ontario County Soil & Water Conservation District, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, the Honeoye Valley Association, Finger Lakes Community College, the Honeoye Lake Watershed Task Force, and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service came together with four objectives: flood attenuation, pollutant removal, habitat creation, and increased passive recreational opportunities. Princeton Hydro (pH) was contracted by TNC and the HLWTF to update the hydrologic and nutrient budgets of Honeoye Lake and provide recommendations.



Their analysis, coupled with the project objectives, led to a four-part solution. Firstly, reconnect the stream and the floodplain to replicate the flood storage functionality of a floodplain. Secondly, fill some of the ditches that run perpendicular to Honeoye Inlet to force flood flows out into the adjacent land. Thirdly, lengthen 3,700 feet of the inlet stream to recreate meander and sinuosity primarily in its more northern end. Lastly, construct a backwater wetland to provide additional pollutant removal. Princeton Hydro estimated that this project would reduce the total external load of nutrients into the lake from the watershed by ~30%.



The Inlet Restoration Project was funded by a \$300,000 DEC WQIP grant award, ~\$50,000 of resident donations to The Nature Conservancy, and ~\$50,000 of in-kind labor. Also, starting in 2016 until spring of 2018, community volunteers planted approximately 6000 native trees/shrubs along the new inlet channel to stabilize the inlet stream bank. We greatly appreciated your donations and volunteer tree/shrub planting help for this project.

The project was completed in October 2016 and the Honeoye Inlet area is now flourishing with wildlife and is slowing the sediment and nutrient loading into Honeoye Lake. The combined achievement of all the organizations and individuals is so significant to not only Honeoye Lake but also to conservation mindfulness in general, that in 2018 the project earned the well-deserved Environmental Innovation award in the Civic Non Profit category by the Seneca Zoo Society for their incredible efforts!



So, the next time you look to the south end of Honeoye Lake with its wild landscape, floating lily pads and beaver dams remember that it is the lifeblood of Honeoye Lake and be thankful for the vision and efforts that brought it back to life.

We welcome your feedback at the email address below and encourage you to exchange viewpoints with your neighbors, family and friends. HVA has been, and will continue to be, an active partner in the future of the Honeoye Lake watershed and is committed to communicating accurate information that leads to informed opinions regarding lake management recommendations.

Watch for more articles in the coming weeks and get to Know Your Lake!

- To find out more about the incredible Honeoye Inlet Restoration Project, read these articles and view the videos:

<https://www.honeoyelakewatershed.org/honeoye-inlet-restoration-project>

<https://www.hvaweb.org/resources/Pictures/HVA%20Symposium%202017%20inlet%20update.pdf>

Also, see this article published by The Finger Lakes Museum:

<https://www.fingerlakesmuseum.org/post/2018/02/28/honeoye-inlet-restoration>

- Follow the Honeoye Inlet Restoration Project on its journey from inception to realization in these newsletters:

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- Interested in Princeton Hydro's (pH) full report? Find it here:

https://fd57d705-f86c-4662-90ab-7627c560e9d2.filesusr.com/ugd/e6fc30_5b337fe82b2a4ab69a8dd824526974ea.pdf

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