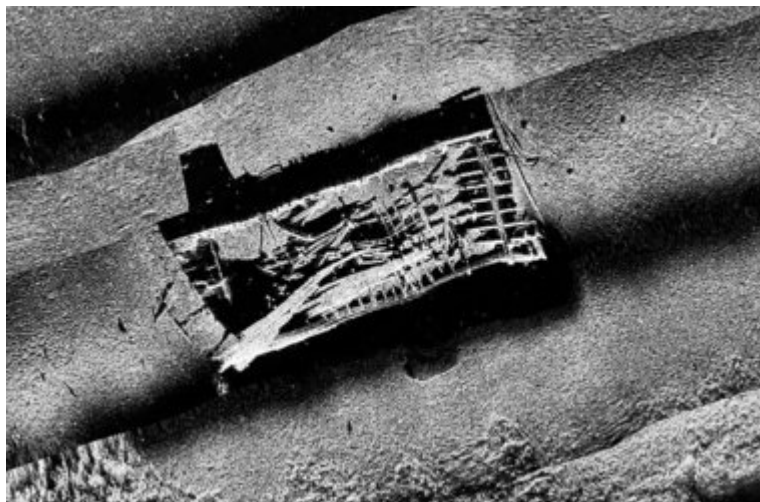


Honeywell to avoid boat wrecks on bottom of Onondaga Lake while dredging

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By Rick Moriarty/The Post-Standard



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Courtesy of Lake Champlain Maritime Museum

Sonar image shows a 93-foot-long boat in about 20 feet of water on the bottom of Onondaga Lake north of Lake View Point.

Syracuse, N.Y. -- Honeywell International Inc. has agreed to avoid sunken canal boats, pier remains and other historical artifacts when it dredges decades of industrial waste from the bottom of Onondaga Lake starting this year.

The company, the successor to Allied Chemical Co. and its predecessors, said it modified its dredging plans after an archaeological consultant concluded the boat wrecks and the underwater artifacts were historically significant because of their ties to the development of the state Barge Canal system and the Syracuse Inner Harbor.

Lake Champlain Maritime Museum, of Vergennes, Vt., said in a new report to Honeywell that a

58-acre section of the southern end of the lake should be designated a maritime historic district to protect seven wooden vessels and the remains of piers, pilings and a concrete breakwater from the dredging. The relics are significant because of their links to the lake's commercial, industrial and recreational history from the late 1800s and early 1900s.

The museum also recommended that the company avoid damaging four other sunken boats outside of the proposed historical district.

Honeywell said it has adopted the consultant's recommendations and will work around the historical artifacts when it vacuums up 2.65 million cubic yards of lake bottom contaminated with mercury and other hazardous chemicals dumped in the 1800s and 1900s by its predecessors.

The state Historic Preservation Office and the federal Environmental Protection Agency have agreed to the creation of the proposed maritime historic district, a move that will give the wrecks

History beneath the surface

The proposed Syracuse Maritime Historic District contains seven sunken canal boats, the remains of the old Salina Pier and Iron Pier and other artifacts. Honeywell International Inc. has agreed to work around the artifacts during upcoming cleanup operations to avoid destroying them. The company also



and artifacts the same protections as buildings on the National Register of Historic Places, said John Vetter, national expert in archaeology and historic preservation for the EPA.

That does not mean the wrecks won't be adversely affected by the cleanup. After the dredging is completed in 2016, Honeywell plans to cap areas of the lake bottom with sand and gravel. All of the sunken boats within the proposed historical district will be covered by the capping material, so little, if any, of the boats will be visible to divers after the cleanup.

However, the creation of the historical district will require Honeywell to first document the vessels through measurements, photographs, video recordings and measurements.

Adam Kane, archaeological director and diver for the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum, said the capping material will not damage the boats because they are so large and strongly built. The capping material will protect the wrecks, especially those in shallow water, from damage caused by waves and ice, he said.

Honeywell said the changes to its dredging plans and the need to extensively document the presence of the wrecks will not delay its cleanup project or add to its cost. The dredging and capping are part of a \$451 million court-ordered cleanup by the company.

has agreed to work around a boat discovered in about 20 feet of water a short distance north of Lake View Point. A sonar image (above center) shows the 92-foot-long boat, which likely carried rocks and other loose materials in the early 1900s, to be nearly completely intact and sitting upright. Unlike most of the other boats in the lake bottom, researchers believe its sinking may not have been intentional.



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GRAPHIC: Map locating Syracuse Maritime Historic District and location of sunken rock scow.

The seven boats within the proposed historical district most likely were intentionally sunk in the early 1900s as commerce on the state's canal system declined and wooden boats were replaced by metal ones, according to the museum. Such sinkings were illegal but apparently commonplace in the southeast corner of the lake near the entrance to the Inner Harbor, a former Barge Canal terminal that the city of Syracuse is trying to develop into a recreational, residential and commercial attraction.

"It became a logical place to abandon boats," said Kane, who personally examined many of the wrecks during dives last summer. "You tuck it in this corner, well, probably nobody is going to say anything."

He said the sunken vessels, though mostly intact, are not historically significant enough to raise and preserve. That's a process that would take more than a decade and cost millions of dollars. Such efforts are usually reserved for boats with major national or naval historical interest, such as the H.L. Hunley, the Confederate Civil War submarine raised in 2000 from the waters off Charleston, S.C., 136 years after its sinking.

However, Kane said the vessels in Onondaga Lake represent direct ties to the history of the 4.6-square-mile lake and the state's canal system.

Barges and scows carried products and materials along the canal system and beyond in the 1800s and early 1900s. Boats took passengers from the old Salina Pier to the many resorts that dotted the lake's western shore until industrial pollution and the emergence of the automobile forced all of them to close by the 1930s. Boats also brought people to and from the Iron Pier resort that once existed on what is now called Murphy's Island near the Carousel Center mall.

"Collectively, they tell you a bigger story," Kane said of the underwater artifacts. "You get to understand the whole breadth of what is out there. This is the story of Onondaga Lake in the last 100 years."



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John Berry/The Post-Standard

Canada geese swim along Onondaga Lake Thursday, with Syracuse skyline in background. Honeywell International Inc. will begin dredging the lake bottom later this year to remove industrial waste dumped in the 1800s and 1900s by its predecessors.

The West Side of Onondaga Lake

Reporter Rick Moriarty explores the west side of Onondaga Lake where Honeywell International, Inc. will begin dredging.

The museum's recommendations are included in a 258-page report prepared for Honeywell, whose predecessors, including Allied Chemical and the old Solvay Process Co., dumped mercury, benzene and other chemicals into the lake in the 1800s and 1900s.

Honeywell hired the museum to identify, through sonar and other means, **historical artifacts on the lake bottom** prior to the company's dredging operations, which are scheduled to start later this year and take up to five years to complete.

Kane said Honeywell has agreed to modify its plans so the work will not destroy the sunken vessels and other artifacts in the proposed historical district. Honeywell also has agreed to dredge around several sunken boats and barges outside of the proposed historic district. They include a rock scow — a wooden boat that carried crushed stone, sand and other loose materials — just north of Lake View Point, about mid-way up the lake, and two barges off the southern shore of the tiny peninsula.

Almost 93 feet long and 33 feet wide, the scow is a well-preserved, early 20th century boat resting in about 20 feet of water on the hard lake bed found in that area. (Most of the wrecks in other areas of the lake are partially covered by muck from a soft, murky bottom.) Sonar images show that most of the boat's deck joists are still in place.

Unlike the vessels in the proposed historic district, the rock scow's mid-lake location indicates it was "lost in distress," probably 60 to 80 years ago, the museum said.

The scow sits in an area that was to be capped under Honeywell's original cleanup plan. However, the company altered its plans after sediments collected by divers revealed no hazardous substances inside the boat, Kane said.

The two barges on the southern shore of Lake View Point sit in one to three feet of water and are the only sunken vessels visible from the lake's shoreline. One of them is partially buried under an 80-foot high pile of industrial waste, indicating it was placed there sometime between 1918, when Solvay Process Co. began dumping waste from its soda ash production on the peninsula, and 1943, when it stopped, the museum said.

Kane said the vessels may have been put there to aid in the dumping and simply abandoned when waste tumbled down on top of one of them.

Honeywell is planning to install a retaining wall along the peninsula's shoreline to stop the toothpaste-like waste — mostly calcium carbonate — from washing into the lake. It has agreed to build the retaining wall around the barges instead of over them, Kane said.

Allied closed its soda ash production facility in Solvay in 1986. Since then, the health of the lake, which was once considered one of the most polluted lakes in the nation, has improved. Major upgrades to Onondaga County's wastewater collection and treatment system and reductions in stormwater runoff and industrial pollution have increased water clarity and boosted oxygen levels.

The improvements also have boosted the lake's fish population. Kane said yellow perch and large carps constantly bombarded him during his dives to Onondaga Lake's boat wrecks. "The lake has an unbelievable body of fish life," he said. "It has more fish life than I've every seen."



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Ellen Blalock/The Post-Standard

Ed Prossner, project manager with O'Brien & Gere engineers, watches the installation of equipment Thursday at a water treatment plant built by Honeywell International Inc. in Geddes. Water dredged from Onondaga Lake will be treated at the facility before being pumped back into the lake.

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Lake Champlain Maritime Museum's Archaeological Report on Onondaga Lake

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