

# **NY State Fair Announces First-of-Its Kind Exhibit Focusing On Onondaga Lake's Past, Present, and Future**

**Fair Joins With Many State and Local Partners to Create Huge Interactive Attraction Tying the Lake's Improvement to Economic and Ecological Progress**

[See a gallery of photos from the news conference, below.]

New York State Agriculture Commissioner Darrel J. Aubertine today announced that the Great New York State Fair will play host to a major exhibit that will show New Yorkers how coordinated remediation efforts between state and local partners at Onondaga Lake is changing the region and providing for future economic vitality. The exhibit, called "Onondaga Lake: A Fresh Gateway to a *New New York*," has been developed over many months by a host of state and local organizations. The exhibit will occupy more than 3,000 square feet of space, occupying an entire wing of the Center of Progress Building.

"Onondaga Lake is undergoing a tremendous transformation thanks to the dedication of committed organizations and important public-private partnerships," Commissioner Aubertine said. "At this year's State Fair, this new exhibit will tell a tremendous story of the lake's earliest days, its darkest hours and most importantly, its resurrection. I can't wait to see this major attraction in person and urge every New York resident to visit the Fair this year to learn about this 'Gateway to a New New York.'"

The exhibit will take visitors on the lake's long journey from its ancient role as the home of the Iroquois people, through the massive remediation effort underway on the lake now, to the developments on its shoreline such as Destiny USA and the upcoming Inner Harbor project.

Fairgoers will be able to see the fish species that are returning to the lake as it improves. They'll discover that the return of the fish has helped to bring back the Bald Eagle to the area and, if they've spotted an eagle recently, they can contribute to a project that will map the places it has been spotted.

The exhibit, which will be assembled in the final days before the Fair opens, will also show how the work being done on Onondaga Lake is tied to economic growth far beyond the lakeshore, while highlighting the state's scores of economic investments through all 10 of the Regional Economic Development Councils that formed the heart of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo's strategy for reinvesting in New York.

The organizations involved in creating this exhibit, besides the State Fair, which is part of the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, are: The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation; the Empire State Development Corp.; the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry; Morrisville State College; Onondaga County and its Save

The Rain initiative; Honeywell; O'Brien & Gere Engineering; Destiny USA; COR Development; CenterState CEO; Audubon New York; Milton J. Rubenstein Museum of Science and Technology; and the Onondaga Historical Association.

NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Commissioner Joe Martens said, "Onondaga Lake water quality continues to improve as cleanup projects are completed, which is also having a positive effect on the lake's fishery, bird habitat and recreational opportunities. Central New York is now experiencing remarkable environmental and economical benefits as a result of the lake cleanup efforts and we are continuing to make strides to restore the lake as a valued natural resource in the region."

Empire State Development President, CEO & Commissioner Kenneth Adams said, "Onondaga Lake and the Syracuse Inner Harbor have great history and an even brighter future. The Inner Harbor redevelopment is transforming the Onondaga Lake waterfront into an area that will help to revitalize the Syracuse economy by creating thousands of new jobs for New Yorkers, generating hundreds of millions in investment, and attracting new businesses and tourists. We are thrilled to be part of this exhibit as there is no better place than the Great New York State Fair to put on display our collaborative efforts to clean up Onondaga Lake and turn the Inner Harbor into an economic staple of Central New York."

Cornelius B. Murphy, Jr., President of the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry said, "The students and faculty of SUNY ESF have been studying the Onondaga Lake Ecosystem for nearly three decades. The future of the lake and its watershed is bright, with stabilization of the waste beds, increased diversity of aquatic and shoreline plants, fishes and many kinds of invertebrates such as crayfish and dragonflies. Dissolved oxygen levels in the lake have increased, ammonia levels are low, and aquatic vegetation now covers 80% of the shallow water zone. Shoreline trails, enhanced marina facilities, and reduced toxic materials are all part of a remarkable recovery. The positive interaction of the many stakeholders and contributors has been phenomenal, and all have worked together tirelessly to restore this local and national treasure."

Onondaga County Executive Joanie Mahoney said, "We are proud of the dramatic change seen in Onondaga Lake. Our Save the Rain program is providing real results and has become a national model. Thank you to Governor Cuomo for choosing to highlight our compelling story at the New York State Fair. It will be an excellent showcase. Onondaga County's residents have invested heavily in the restoration of Onondaga Lake and I know they will be proud to see what we have already accomplished."

Robert Simpson, president of CenterState CEO and co-chair of the Central New York Regional Economic Development Council said, "The cleanup of Onondaga Lake has brought together an unprecedented team of scientists, engineers, and specialists to address a fundamental environmental need for the community. The solutions and advancements that these partners have developed not only serve the immediate environmental needs of the lake and restore this significant natural asset, but provide new economic opportunity, whether through ecotourism, recreation, or by serving as a model for implementing green technologies in other markets."

John McAuliffe, Honeywell Syracuse program director, said, “The progress that has been made is due in large measure to the talent, creativity, and dedication of so many who reside and work in this community – from the regulators and elected officials to the academic, environmental, nonprofit and business communities to our partners and workers. At the end of this year, dredging is expected to be about halfway complete. We will continue working together to fulfill the public’s vision for Onondaga Lake and return it to the community as a healthy, sustainable asset for future generations.”

Chris Nyberg, Dean of SUNY Morrisville’s School of Agriculture, Sustainability, Business and Entrepreneurship said, “Morrisville State College and O’Brien & Gere, two innovative leaders in Central New York, embarked on an aquaponics project, a form of polyculture combining hydroponics with aquaculture in a system that allows the plants and fish to benefit each other. This all takes place on our campus in a controlled environment agriculture greenhouse (CEA), which is a closed-loop system for year-round food production. As a leader in agriculture and green initiatives within the SUNY system, we support efforts to stimulate economic growth while maintaining the integrity and sustainability of food sources, water, and soil. Morrisville State College’s display is an interactive exhibit of CEA systems that can scale from small home gardens, suitable even for urban locations, to large scale commercial greenhouses. Through the support of Senator David J. Valesky (D-Oneida), the Empire State Development Corporation and a grant from the New York State Energy Research and Development Agency (NYSERDA), Morrisville State College’s CEA greenhouse project reduces costs and environmental impact while providing local, healthy, nutritious and environmentally sustainable food.”

Destiny USA’s David Aitken said, “Destiny USA is a proud partner in the Onondaga lakefront development as an economic generator alongside The Great New York State Fair. Thirty years ago, the Syracuse community viewed environmental disaster and lake destruction surrounding Onondaga Lake. Pyramid took great strides in cleaning up the land surrounding the lakefront and building a tourist attraction to help draw visitors from around the world. This exhibit displays the partnership and strength of Syracuse community hubs that have transformed the Syracuse lakefront and made it a tourism and economic hotspot. As the largest shopping destination in New York State, Destiny USA is honored to stand beside these exhibit partners in helping to display the dynamic, new and fresh developments taking place on Onondaga Lake.”

Steve Aiello, President of COR Development, LLC said, “Work at the Inner Harbor is underway. COR Development is transforming 28 acres around the Syracuse Inner Harbor into a unique urban mixed-use waterfront community. The project represents over \$350 million dollars of construction costs and will be phased over 7 years creating over 4,000 permanent jobs and 8,000 construction jobs. COR is pleased to participate in this collaborative exhibit and share the combined vision of the State of New York, City of Syracuse and COR Development working in concert to reshape the future of the Harbor and Onondaga Lake for many years to come.”

Jim Fox, Chairman and CEO, O’Brien & Gere, said, “With more than 500 employees throughout New York State, O’Brien & Gere has been a part of the Central New York community for 68 years and a part of the Onondaga Lake restoration team for more than 50 years. Along with many of our local partners, we are pleased to play a role in this exhibit, which will help educate participants on the progress that has been made to date and the great plans for the future.”

Erin Crotty, Executive Director of Audubon New York said, “Onondaga Lake has a storied past and a bright future, and we commend Governor Cuomo and all the partners for developing this unique display to educate visitors on Lake’s importance and ongoing restoration efforts. Recently, Audubon selected Onondaga as a priority Important Bird Area to focus our efforts to improve the area’s habitat for birds. Bird watching is the fastest growing outdoor recreational activity and contributes billions annually to the State’s tourism economy. The continued restoration of the Lake will make the area more attractive to ecotourism, and we look forward to working with all partners to make this restoration a success.”

Gregg Tripoli, Executive Director of the Onondaga Historical Association said, “Centuries ago, our Native American ancestors created the first representative democracy in the west on the shores of Onondaga Lake with the establishment of the Great Law of Peace. Since then the Lake has meant many things to many people. In our recent history, it has, unfortunately, become known as the most polluted lake in the nation. But, thanks to the organizations represented in this powerful exhibit, the Lake is, once again, becoming a place of hope, renewal, resilience, and pride that represent the heritage of our community, our state, and our country. Nothing demonstrates that more than the return to its environs of our country’s great symbol, the bald eagle. Onondaga Lake is the perfect example of how we can learn from the lessons of our past to forge a brighter future together.”

Larry Leatherman, President of the Milton J. Rubenstein Museum of Science and Technology said, “The Milton J. Rubenstein Museum of Science & Technology continues to create awareness of the history, importance, and future potential of Onondaga Lake through hands-on exhibits at the museum, educational outreach activities, and field trip opportunities for numerous students encompassing the lake and its tributaries. We are pleased to assist in the development of this exciting attraction at this year’s New York State Fair.”

The New York State Fair runs from August 22 – September 2, 2013. The Fair’s theme is “Sharing the Bounty and Pride of New York.”

In addition to the annual New York State Fair, the Fairgrounds host dozens of agricultural events throughout the year, including some of the Northeast’s most prestigious horse and livestock shows.

The home of the Great New York State Fair is a 375-acre exhibit and entertainment complex that operates all year. A year-round schedule of events is available on the Fair’s [website](#). Find [The Great New York State Fair on Facebook](#) or follow [NYS Fair on Twitter](#). Also, New Yorkers are invited to send their ideas on the Great New York State Fair at [statefairideas@agriculture.ny.gov](mailto:statefairideas@agriculture.ny.gov).