



## **Report on Shoreline Damage Resulting From No-Drawdown of Onota Lake in 2019**

**August 3, 2020**

LOPA understands there are many considerations that go into lake management decisions regarding winter drawdowns. One important consideration is shoreline damage that can cause erosion with negative impacts on lake ecology, along with adverse economic impacts to shoreline property owners. LOPA prepared this report in order to make a record of the shoreline damage resulting from City of Pittsfield's failure to conduct a drawdown of Onota Lake in 2019, and to help inform local government officials and state regulatory agencies about negative impacts of ice damage that can result from failing to conduct an annual winter drawdown at Onota Lake.

The City of Pittsfield did not conduct the normal 3' drawdown of Onota Lake in 2019, for reasons having to do with the Mill Street Dam Removal Project and heightened regulatory oversight from the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection. Lake Onota Preservation Association (LOPA) expressed concerns about possible resulting shoreline damage, and conducted a survey of property owners along Onota Lake in order to assess that damage.

The survey instrument was posted at LOPA website (<https://onotalake.com/shoreline-damage-assessment/>), and letters were sent to 160 private property owners asking them to complete the survey. Surveys for 57 properties were received - a response rate of 35%. The survey was conducted over a three month period ending July 22, 2020.

The reported effects of the 2019 no-drawdown were varied: 28% reported no damage; 53% reported some form of shoreline erosion; 51% reported damage to bulkhead, retaining wall, dock or structures; 25% reported damage to grass, yard, or shrubbery. Among those experiencing damage, 38% described the damage as significant. 45% of respondents reported that no-drawdown interfered with maintenance and repairs.

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Some property owners submitted photographs of the damage. Several of these are attached to illustrate the nature of the damage reported by property owners. Additional photos show damage to public property at Burbank Park and Dan Casey Causeway.

It also seems likely the 2019 no-drawdown contributed to an unusually great abundance of Eurasian milfoil the following spring, which was a costly inconvenience to property owners and added to the City's cost of herbicide treatment in the spring of 2020. The need for herbicide treatment to control Eurasian milfoil was so great that LOPA found it necessary to make a substantial one-time donation to supplement the City's insufficient herbicide budget.

In conclusion, an annual winter drawdown of Onota Lake is important to avoid shoreline erosion and damage to property, to allow property owners to undertake necessary maintenance and repairs, and to help to control invasive weeds.

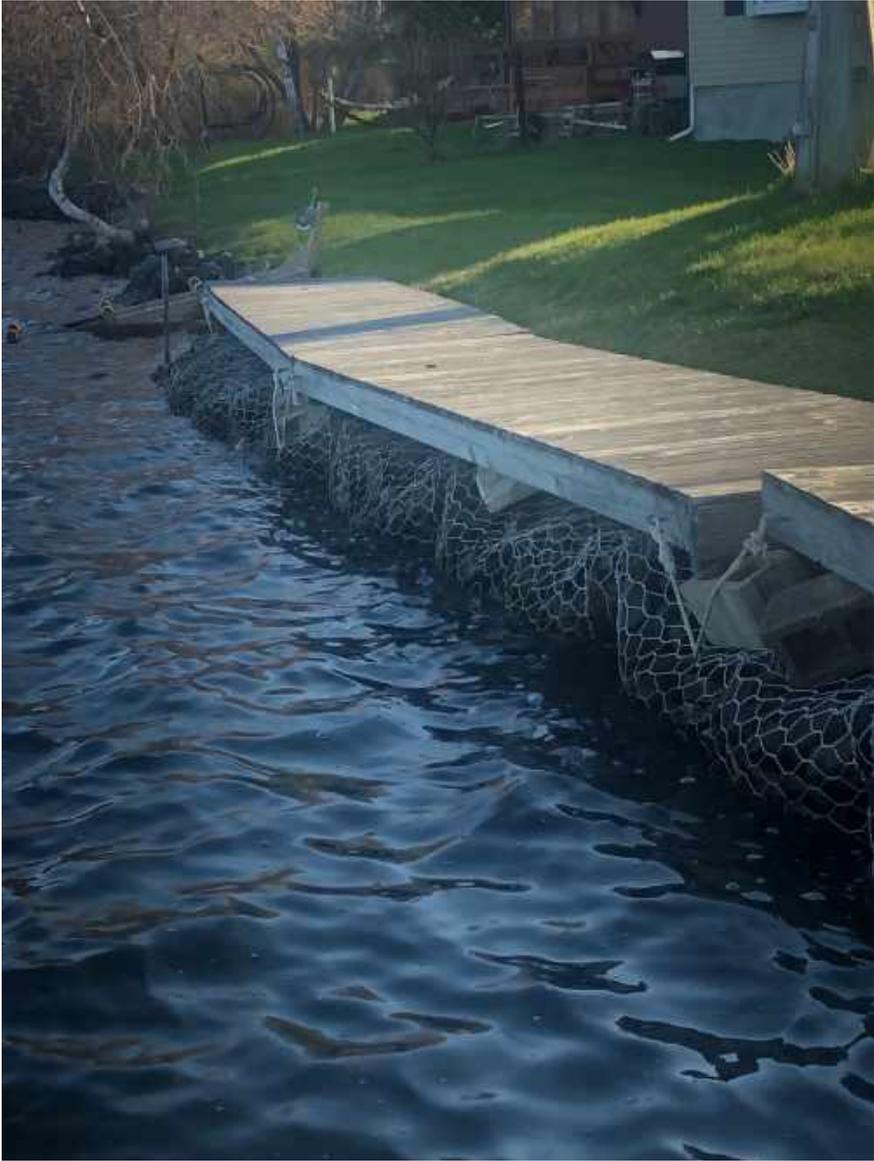
M. Riordan  
LOPA President

**Attachment:  
Photographic evidence**

**Bank erosion**



**Damage to docks**



**Damage to retaining walls**



**Damage to yard**



**Damage at Burbank Park near Controy Pavilion**



**More damage at Burbank Park near Controy Pavilion**



**Damage at Dan Casey Causeway**

