***Public input is needed***

**Please give five minutes to help update**

 **the Cayuga Lake Watershed Restoration & Protection Plan**

***Special questions for stakeholders in the future of our lake: Youth!***

On behalf of the Cayuga Lake Watershed Intermunicipal Organization (IO), the Town of Ithaca has accepted funding from the New York State Department of State (NYS DOS) to oversee an update of the Cayuga Lake Watershed Restoration and Protection Plan (RPP). During 2015 and into 2016, the Intermunicipal Organization is partnering with the Cayuga Lake Watershed Network (Network) and numerous others to conduct this update.

The original plan was completed in 2001, the result of a watershed-wide process that drew together town and village officials, local and regional agencies, experts and local residents via meetings and presentations. The group developed a long-range visionary plan, harnessing the energy of the watershed’s 45 municipalities to evaluate the condition of Cayuga Lake and its tributaries, and formulate restoration and protection strategies.

As a result of the original plan (available at [www.cayugawatershed.org](http://www.cayugawatershed.org) ), IO member municipalities (the Town of Dryden is a founding member of the organization) have been awarded six rounds of funding from NYS DOS totaling nearly $300,000 for projects devoted to streambank stabilization, habitat restoration, and flood control. In addition, the IO supports public engagement and youth education through the Floating Classroom, which provides scholarships, lake access, STEM enrichment cruises and “Trout in the Classroom” programs for over 2,500 students annually.

Hilary Lambert, the Network’s steward, is coordinating the 16-month update with information and opportunities for public input available on the Network’s website. An important part of the process is hearing from the public. A current opportunity for the public to provide input is a questionnaire seeking comments, observations, and recommendations from watershed residents, available online at [www.cayugalake.org](http://www.cayugalake.org) .

It is important for people within the watershed to let their municipalities and New York State know how they value the watershed and how they view its condition. I hope you will take the opportunity to fill out the online questionnaire. Our beautiful and invaluable water resources will need our continual attention and care in the coming years and an updated Restoration and Protection Plan plays an important part in those efforts. This plan is funded by the NYS Department of State through the Title 11 Environmental Protection Fund.

Please alert younger people – aged 0-18 – to the set of questions designed for their response. Youth is an important stakeholder group in the watershed: they inherit tomorrow what we do today, and may have some interesting opinions and ideas about how to take care of the Cayuga Lake watershed.

To be added to the RPP Process Update email list, or to have a copy of the questionnaire mailed to you, please send an email request to Hilary Lambert steward@cayugalake.org or leave a message at the Network’s office number (607) 319 0475.