

# Watershed Management Plans: Intermunicipal Agreements for Water Quality and Protection

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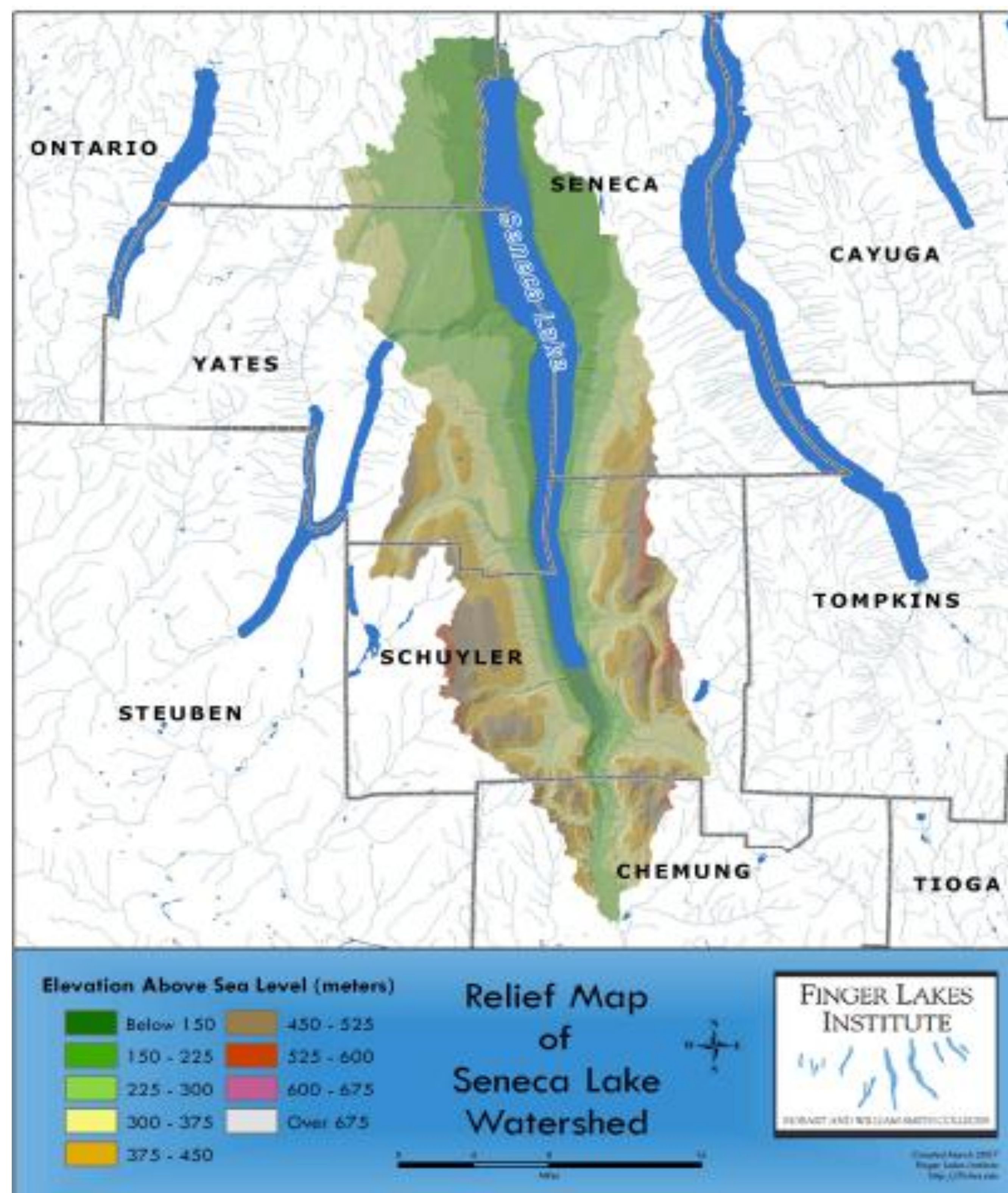
## Current Efforts

Currently there are many organizations that have a vested interest and play a role in enhancing the quality of Seneca Lake. The Seneca Lake Pure Waters Association (SLPWA), the Finger Lakes, Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance (FOLLOWPA) and the Genesee-Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council (GFLRPC) are all groups that have made recommendations and carried out enhancement and protection projects in the watershed. Below is an outline of the basics of each group and their relevance to the Seneca Lake watershed.

	SLPWA	FOLLOWPA	GFLRPC
<i>Region</i>	Seneca Lake and watershed	Ontario Drainage Basin, Central and Western New York	Central New York, western Finger Lakes
<i>Members</i>	Concerned citizens	25 counties and state agencies (SWCD) managed by Water Resource Board	9 counties, 32 voting members (locally elected officials)
<i>Power</i>	No regulatory power	Power through counties, no regulatory power	Legal status as a council, non-regulatory, non-taxing
<i>Funding</i>	Fees from members	NYS Environmental Protection Fund	Federal and State government grants
<i>Projects</i>	Marcellus Shale Fracking research, study on landfill leachate, lake level monitoring, LPG storage	County-based, lake and tributary specific. Spectrum of programs.	Canandaigua, Conesus, and Cayuga lakes watershed management plans
<i>Pros</i>	Seneca Lake specific, commitment to continuing research	Information and resource sharing over large region	Resources from State government, successful mgmt plans
<i>Cons</i>	Member-dependent funding base, no legal power	Very large, not Seneca Lake specific	Not watershed or water resource-specific

## Why Intermunicipal Agreement?

Over 100,000 people rely on Seneca Lake for clean drinking water. The best way to ensure that the quality of the lake stays healthy is to have strong watershed protection policy. Within the Seneca Lake watershed there are six counties including Keuka Lake in the watershed (Chemung, Ontario, Schuyler, Seneca, Yates, and Steuben). These counties are home to over 50 municipalities, all with home rule jurisdiction. While many municipalities and interest groups are working to preserve and enhance the health of the lake there could be more collaboration among towns and villages within the watershed. Policy that addresses the entire watershed, applying to every municipality, could prove beneficial to preserving the overall quality of Seneca Lake drinking water.



Map source: The Finger Lakes Institute, March 2007 <<http://fli.hws.edu/maps.asp>>

## Case Studies

There are many existing models of watershed management that could be applied to the Seneca Lake watershed. I reviewed three other watershed management regimes in New York State. Both Canandaigua and Skaneateles Lakes have organized watershed management boards (the Canandaigua Lake Watershed Council and Skaneateles Lake Association Inc., respectively). Outside of the Finger Lakes, the Catskills watershed, which provides drinking water to New York City has a very well organized management body, the Catskill Watershed Corporation.

	Skaneateles	Canandaigua	Catskills
<i>Organization</i>	Incorporated Association	Council of towns, villages, and city	Corporation created from agreement between region, city, and state
<i>Programs</i>	Emphasis on lake ecology protection, 1996 comprehensive 'Master Plan', projects to curb truck traffic	Sucker Brook comprehensive protection plan, Agricultural Environmental Management program, Capital Investment Projects, Septic system inspections	Stormwater management, sand and salt storage solutions, septic system remediation, public education, economic development, tax consulting, land acquisition
<i>Funding</i>	Membership and support from Syracuse, grants from NYS	Member counties and municipalities, some grants from state	New York City, some grants from state

### Application to Seneca Lake:

Between the existing efforts of the Regional Councils and the dedication of the Seneca Lake Pure Waters Association watershed-wide policy approaches are not out of reach. Funding for programs on such a large scale is probably the greatest obstacle facing the potential development of a Seneca Lake watershed management solution.