

Date: May 2024

To: All OCWA Customers/Consumers

From: Jeffrey D. Brown, Executive Director
Geoffrey G. Miller, Executive Director of Operations
Sheilla Roth, Chief Financial Officer

Subject: 2023 Consumer Confidence Report

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR WATER SUPPLY

The Onondaga County Water Authority (“OCWA” or the “Authority”) is pleased to provide our customers and consumers the attached **Consumer Confidence Report**, also known as the annual drinking water quality report, for the year ending December 31, 2023. Throughout this report, readers will find useful information specifically related to the water delivered to you by OCWA. In addition to notifying our customers of the availability of the report, we continue our practice of providing copies of the report to local libraries and advertising its availability in local print media.

During 2023, we once again successfully accomplished our primary mission of providing safe, reliable, and affordable drinking water to our consumers. As in prior years, the water delivered to you not only met prescribed water quality requirements, but in many ways surpassed New York State Department of Health (“NYSDOH”) and the United States Environmental Protection Agency’s (“USEPA”) standards.

While water quality is our most important aspect of our mission, aesthetics and taste of the water are important as well. In April, we won the **Best Tasting Drinking Water in New York State** competition hosted by the American Water Works Association competition. The competition involved a panel of judges who blind taste tested and graded each competing utility’s water submission based on taste, odor, color, clarity, mouthfeel, and aftertaste.

2023 once again saw our employees hard at work in many areas to accomplish our mission. One way we continue to keep our water as affordable and reliable as possible is by minimizing leakage and maximizing the amount of water we have to deliver to our customers. Our leak detection and distribution operations staff combined efforts to identify leaks in the early stages allowing our distribution maintenance staff to make repairs when leaks are small rather than catastrophic in nature. These efforts resulted in our unaccounted water equaling less than 14% of our total output. While our employees always concentrate their efforts on providing high quality, affordable drinking water, we also focus on the “well-being” of our workforce. Our employee-led safety committee continued to meet monthly throughout the year, reviewing policies and procedures and making recommendations on improvements, training, and equipment selection to maintain a safe workplace. These actions once again paid off with OCWA receiving a state-wide safety award from the New York Section of the American Water Works Association in 2023. This was the eighth year out of the last ten that we received this award competing against other water utilities from across New York State.

We continued to significantly reinvest in our five-county water system via several major capital improvement and maintenance projects. This ongoing work helped keep our water system in good operational condition and limit costly service disruptions. Our 2023 capital reinvestment program included continued renovations to our Lake Ontario water treatment facilities. These facilities were constructed in the late 1960’s and have served our community well for close to 60 years. While still

functioning effectively, it has become necessary to make major upgrades to the facilities to ensure that they can continue to provide high quality water for the next 60 years.

We are well into the construction of the second phase of the Lake Ontario system improvements. This phase of the project includes work on our water filtration systems, replacement of major equipment, upgrade to the control systems, and major building maintenance work. The first phase of the project, which included replacement of electrical substations and addition of emergency power generators, was completed in 2022. A third phase will include replacement of onsite water storage tanks. This phase is currently in design and should commence construction in 2025.

The replacement of the water storage facilities at our Hinsdale Road work center in Camillus was completed in 2023. The two six-million-gallon concrete water storage tanks are in service and functioning well to serve our system. This project was recognized by the Central New York Branch of the American Public Works Association (CNYAPWA) as an Environment – Water Resources Project of the Year. In addition, CNYAPWA recognized our Howlett Hill tank rehabilitation project with an award. This project involved repairing the tank to extend its useful life for many more years.

Our ongoing annual capital reinvestment program also includes replacement and renewal of aging watermains, replacement of numerous hydrants and water services, and improvements to tanks, pump stations, and pressure control facilities.

Our Otisco Lake Water Treatment Plant (“Otisco WTP”) continued in 2023 to maintain its Phase III certification under USEPA’s Partnership for Safe Water optimization program, with the plant receiving this certification for the 26th straight year. Also in 2023, our Lake Ontario Water Treatment Plant received the USEPA Partnership for Safe Water Phase IV President’s Award for fully optimized water treatment facilities. The Partnership program supports the Authority and other water utilities in voluntary efforts to achieve greater control and removal of microbial impurities. Our Otisco WTP was the eighth in the nation to be certified under this program. Both treatment plants serve as examples of how OCWA sets and meets higher standards for water quality than are required by state and federal government mandates.

As referenced above, OCWA had many great accomplishments in 2023. And now Central New York is poised for transformational growth and development with the announcement of several large industrial, commercial, housing and community centers readying for construction in the coming years. We are proud to have such a great water system that played a part in our area being selected for these projects. We now must look forward and plan for the growth that is coming by designing improvements to meet the future water needs of these projects, some of which will begin construction in 2025. Significant capital expenditures will be required to meet these multiple growth opportunities. This opportunity echos the past, when our forefathers had the vision and foresight to develop a robust, high quality water system that has brought us to our current state. We must do the same and be visionary to continue to meet our mission for future generations of Central New Yorkers.

To learn more about our water system and water supply, you are urged to read the information included in this report. Readers who have questions regarding the report or require additional information can contact our Water Quality Manager, Lisa Yesensky, by calling 315-455-7061, extension 3157.