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Top News

Taste testers seek region's best water

August 06, 2003

MARK WEINER
ENVIRONMENT NOTEBOOK

An annual contest to see who has the best-tasting water in the state will place the best of Central New York in a regional water showdown today.

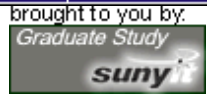
The village of Tully (Onondaga County), Pulaski (Oswego County), DeRuyter (Madison County) and Ithaca (Tompkins County) each won their countywide competition among community water systems.

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They will join Johnstown in Fulton County in the competition from 1 to 2:30 p.m. today at Hinerwadel's Grove, 5300 W. Taft Road, Clay.

The top two in today's contest will go on to compete at this year's New York State Fair, said Manoj Ajmera, the event coordinator. The champion will be announced at the fair Aug. 28.

This is the 17th year of the nonscientific taste test, sponsored by the New York State Section of the American Water Works Association.



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Statewide, more than 150 water systems competed in this year's contest.

Last year, the overall winner was the village of Mexico in Oswego County. For Mexico, which draws its water from wells, it was the second time it won the statewide contest.

Fighting toxic algae Rep. Sherwood Boehlert has given a big boost to scientists at the State University College of Environmental Science and Forestry in Syracuse.

Boehlert, R-New Hartford, the chairman of the House Science Committee, last week helped advance legislation to support research that would help the college and Upstate New York.

A bill approved by his committee would authorize up to \$30 million per year nationally for the next three years to support research into harmful blooms of algae in waterways. SUNY-ESF has one of the few laboratories in the nation that conduct such research and will probably receive some of the federal money.

The algae can cause hypoxia, a condition where decomposing algae consume vital oxygen from the water. The effects of hypoxia include fish kills.

It's a problem that costs the U.S. economy about \$50 million a year. It affects lakes across Central New York, including Oneida Lake and Cayuga Lake, according to Boehlert.

The ESF scientists studying the dense mats of algae also want to learn more about types that produce toxins dangerous to aquatic and human life.

Boehlert also worked to restore money for an existing ESF grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. That grant paid for the initial research into the harmful algal blooms.

Clean water grants The state has \$46 million available to cities, towns and villages for water quality improvement projects.

The Department of Environmental Conservation will accept applications for the money until Sept. 30.

Grants are available for projects that focus on storm water management, improvements to sewage treatment plants, and the restoration of aquatic habitat areas.

A large chunk of the money - \$10 million - is available for sewage improvement projects related to the Onondaga Lake cleanup. Onondaga County is leading the 15-year, \$380 million effort to stop sewage and related pollution from fouling the lake.

DEC officials say applications from previous years will not be carried over. For an application, call the DEC's Bond Act office at (518) 402-9342 or visit DEC's Web site at www.dec.state.ny.us. Mark Weiner covers environment and science issues for The Post-Standard. To reach him, call 470-2274 or send e-mail to citynews@syracuse.com.

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