

Teresa Winchester holds a Ph.D. in French literature, but her love of Otsego County's natural beauty led to her work with the Otsego County Conservation Association. In 1994, she was hired as OCCA's first paid staff for the position of coordinator. In 1998, she became executive director. During her tenure with OCCA, she was instrumental in establishing OCCA's major initiatives: partnership with the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service in carrying out barnyard water management projects in the Otsego Lake watershed (more than 40 to date) and in western Otsego County (six to date); partnership with the same agency in establishing the OCCA-funded position of riparian buffer technician to implement the Conservation Reserve Enhanced Program (CREP); partnership with the Otsego County Planning Department in Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day (HHWCD), for which OCCA funds registration staff and recruits essential volunteer help; publication of an area trails guide, "Otsego Walks and Paddles"; and organization of the first ever Otsego Lake Festival. In 1998, she managed a countywide tire collection as part of the first annual HHWCD. She was the editor and principal writer of OCCA's newsletter, "The Lookout," as well as of OCCA's other publications, opinion pieces, press releases, and letters to the editor. In 1997, she composed a model management plan for Otsego Lake, most of which was incorporated in the official plan, adopted in 1998. In 2005 she received an award for Environmental Excellence from the Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society and in 2006 she received special recognition from the USDA-NRCS when she received the "Working in Harmony" Award. Winchester stepped down as executive director in 2006 to become assistant director.