



NYC WATERSHED PROGRAM PROTECT YOUR DRINKING WATER

INTRODUCTION

The Watershed program ensures that the drinking water consumed by New York City, Westchester, Putnam, Orange and Ulster County residents remains of high quality. The Watershed supplies up to 1.5 billion gallons of unfiltered drinking water per day to more than 9 million people in New York City and parts of Westchester, Putnam, Orange and Ulster Counties.

The Watershed contains 19 reservoirs and 3 controlled lakes and covers approximately 2,000 square miles of land in the Hudson Valley and Catskill Mountains. The Catskill/Delaware Watershed, comprised of approximately 1,600 square miles, is located west of the Hudson River. The Croton Watershed is located east of the Hudson River. Although the two systems are geographically distinct, they are interrelated, as water from the Catskill/Delaware Watershed flows into reservoirs east of the Hudson River before being distributed in New York City.

NEW YORK CITY WATERSHED AGREEMENT

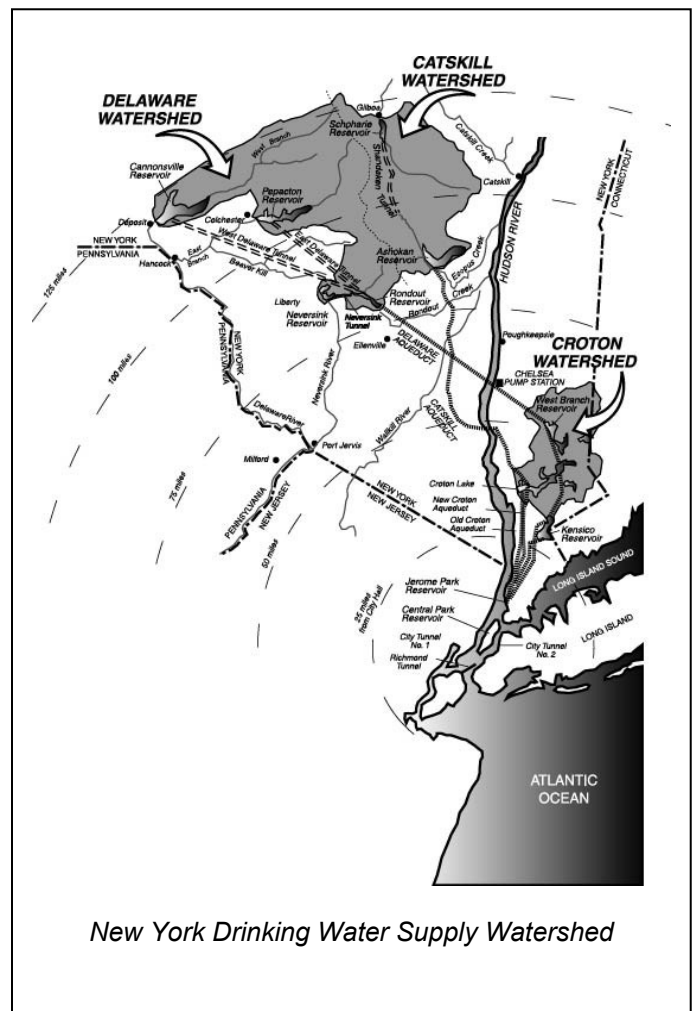
Riverkeeper was a key player in the negotiations leading up to the 1997 New York City Watershed Memorandum of Agreement, which was crafted to protect the unfiltered drinking water supply for over nine million New Yorkers. Riverkeeper now works to ensure that the Agreement is implemented and enforced, and to prevent unchecked development within the Watershed.

SPRAWL

Developers are pushing into every remaining unoccupied corner of the Watershed, building roads, strip malls, office complexes, apartment buildings and residential subdivisions. The East-of-Hudson Watershed, through which 90% of the City's water flows, is suffering an onslaught of real estate development at a pace and scale never before witnessed. In fact, according to the 2000 census, Putnam County is the fastest growing suburban county in the state. As a result, the drinking water for 9 million New Yorkers is in jeopardy. The greatest consequence of sprawl is the increase in impervious surfaces (roads, driveways, building footprints), which devour open space, wetlands, forests, and hillsides, increasing erosion and curtailing the landscape's ability to naturally purify stormwater. Instead, rain collects on impervious surfaces, scours pollutants off the roads, gathers velocity, and runs off into the nearest surface waters. To combat sprawl, Riverkeeper engages in the environmental review of dozens of development projects in the Watershed. Riverkeeper also takes a proactive approach to sprawl, encouraging a "build up, not out" philosophy. By encouraging growth around our community centers, we can revitalize our main streets, benefit locally owned businesses, and preserve open space, all while reducing pavement levels.

WATER QUALITY POLICY

Economic growth and environmental protection go hand in hand. Society cannot exist without clean water. Our watershed team works as an advocate for stronger watershed protection policies on a local, state and federal level.



CITIZEN OUTREACH

A strong community cares about water quality and local government decisions that affect water quality. Our watershed team works with a coalition of over 60 civic and environmental groups. We provide strategic guidance and access to information to these groups and to watershed citizens. To educate and assist citizens and other groups, we host informational workshops, maintain a continuous flow of communication, provide sample comment letters, attend citizen meetings, and speak at various conferences and symposia. Educated watershed citizens allow us to be more effective at protecting the water supply and building strong communities.

INVESTIGATIONS/ENFORCEMENT/LITIGATION

Riverkeeper was founded on the premise of using law and science to bring polluters to justice. Polluters operate as if they have an unfettered right to liquidate our communities' natural resources for short-term profit. However, there is no constitutional right to use property in a way that diminishes your neighbor's property or injures the community. We use the Clean Water Act and other environmental laws to prosecute polluters. After undertaking an investigation, we either commence litigation against a polluter or refer the case to a local, state, or federal agency. We often work closely with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, the Office of the State Attorney General, and the New York City Department of Environmental Protection Police to prosecute polluters.

WHAT WE'RE DOING

Public Outreach, Grassroots Organization and Coalition Building – Riverkeeper works with a coalition of over 60 civic and environmental groups. We provide strategic guidance and access to information to these groups and to watershed citizens.

Anti-Sprawl Initiative – We advocate for planning decisions that revitalize existing town centers, benefit locally owned businesses, and preserve open space.

Education – We have developed a watershed stream monitoring program that allows middle school and high school students to monitor the health of watershed streams.

Litigation – We bring lawsuits against polluters and government agencies.

Policy – We advocate stronger watershed protection policies from government agencies.

Enforcement – We assist environmental police agencies in criminal investigations.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Help Riverkeeper protect the Watershed! Join our Action Alert network and be alerted of important rulings and citizen events. Go to: www.riverkeeper.org and sign-up. You can make a difference, here are a few things you can do to help our efforts in the protection of our drinking water supply:

- Divert rain from paved surfaces onto grasses to permit gradual absorption.
- Monitor your septic tank yearly and have a reputable contractor remove sludge and scum every 3-5 years.
- Clean up after your pets.
- If you must use fertilizer, use low-phosphorus or no-phosphorus fertilizer.
- Use pesticide alternatives, such as species-specific bacteria, predator stocking and pheromone lures.
- Use integrated pest management to control weeds and insects.
- Plant and protect vegetation on the slopes of stream banks and adjacent areas to prevent erosion.
- Do not mow to stream edge.
- Landscape lawns with trees and shrubs to minimize storm water runoff.



A sediment plume in the Croton Watershed.

*For more information, contact us at
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