



October 2016

Dear New York State resident,

The drinking water crisis in Newburgh, NY, where the drinking water supply for a city of 29,000 is contaminated with a toxic chemical, prompted Riverkeeper to analyse the rules and regulations related to protecting drinking water supplies in New York State. Our observations and conclusions are documented in “Contamination of the Drinking Water Reservoir and Watershed of the City of Newburgh: A Case Study and a Call for Comprehensive Source Water Protection,” available at riverkeeper.org/newburgh.

While our analysis was specific to Newburgh, many of our conclusions are relevant to all New York State public drinking water supplies. New and improved laws and regulations would enhance our ability to protect drinking water supplies, but there exists today a framework to achieve the protection of source waters -- the streams, wetlands and open lands necessary to naturally filter and preserve drinking water quality. However, these laws and regulations are poorly coordinated among multiple agencies and levels of government, and in too many cases incompletely or inadequately implemented.

The NYS Source Water Protection Scorecard is designed to empower you to assess your own drinking water supply's protections. It will not rate the quality of the water coming from your taps. Rather, this scorecard is intended to assess the protections afforded to the watershed that supplies and naturally filters your drinking water. While treatment technologies are available to remove most known contaminants, protecting watersheds is universally accepted as the most affordable long-term strategy for providing high quality drinking water. It also benefits the environment and the broad array of life that we hold in trust for future generations.

While we encourage elected officials, water system operators and others with positions of authority to utilize the scorecard, it is intended for use by any and all residents. We expect conservation advisory councils, watershed groups and others can make good use of it. We want it to inspire greater awareness and implementation of the strategies available to preserve high quality drinking water.

Sincerely,

Water Quality Program Director