



walkill river  
watershed alliance

January 29, 2018

Senator George A. Amedore, Jr.  
Senate District 46  
State Capitol Building, Room 802  
Albany, NY 12247

Senator John J. Bonacic  
Senate District 42  
State Capitol Building, Room 503  
Albany, NY 12247

Assemblyman Karl Brabenec  
Assembly District 98  
LOB Room 723  
Albany, NY 12248

Assemblyman Kevin A. Cahill  
Assembly District 103  
LOB 716  
Albany, NY 12248

Assemblyman Steve Englebright  
Chair, Environmental Conservation Committee  
LOB 621  
Albany, NY 12248

Assemblywoman Aileen M. Gunther  
Assembly District 100  
Member, Encon Committee  
LOB 826  
Albany, NY 12248

Senator William J. Larkin, Jr.  
Senate District 39  
State Capitol Building, Room 502  
Albany, NY 12247

Assemblyman Brian D. Miller  
Assembly District 101  
Member, Encon Committee  
LOB 544  
Albany, NY 12248

Senator Thomas F. O'Mara  
Chair, Encon Committee  
LOB 307  
Albany, NY 12247

Assemblyman James Skoufis  
Assembly District 99  
LOB 704  
Albany, NY 12248

**RE: Inclusion of the Wallkill River in New York State Harmful Algal Blooms Initiative**

Dear Senators Amedore, Bonacic, Larkin and O'Mara; and Assemblymembers Brabenec, Cahill, Englebright, Gunther, Miller and Skoufis:

We write to you as representatives of the Wallkill River Watershed, and/or members of the Environmental Conservation committees, to request that you include the Wallkill River in the statewide initiative to combat Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) proposed by Governor Cuomo.



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This initiative, announced as part of the 2018 State of the State address, would focus resources on understanding the underlying causes of, and identifying solutions to prevent future HABs. Such an effort would significantly help our efforts, in collaboration with the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), to respond to HABs on the Wallkill.

The Wallkill River runs for just under 90 miles, and is one arm of the largest tributary to the Hudson River Estuary. In 2015 and 2016, the Wallkill River experienced Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs) documented by citizen data with confirmation by the DEC. Anecdotal evidence suggests blooms also occurred in previous years, but were not documented. The 2016 bloom was severe, affecting 30 miles of the river for as much as 60 days, affecting 10 towns and villages in Orange and Ulster Counties.

Recreational uses of the river were impaired during the bloom. A private beach closed, a small business suspended kayak tours and rentals, public paddles were canceled, and the DEC posted signage at boating and fishing access sites warning the public about risks of exposure to the water. Use of the water for irrigation was a concern for many farmers and gardeners that irrigate with river water. The Wallkill River bloom in 2016 also affected a portion of the Rondout Creek downstream of the confluence of the Wallkill, which is part of the source waters identified by the Department of Health for public drinking water supplies that rely on the Hudson River Estuary. More than 100,000 people rely on drinking water from the Hudson in Port Ewen, Rhinebeck, Highland, Hyde Park and Poughkeepsie.

We ask for your support in including the Wallkill River in the state action plan for addressing Harmful Algal Blooms in 2018.

Sincerely,

Dan Shapley  
Water Quality Program Director  
Riverkeeper

Jason West  
Executive Director  
Walkkill River Watershed Alliance