



Riverkeeper's 2021 Legislative Memorandum

Support - S6322-A/A4067-A (Harckham/Abinanti)- Support

Riverkeeper strongly supports this legislation which would create a road salt task force for the East-of-Hudson New York City watershed, and start a pilot program to explore practices that can reduce salt contamination while maintaining winter road safety. Road salt application is critical to public safety in the winter months in the East-of-Hudson New York City drinking watershed and across New York. However, the application of salt has led to negative ecological effects on water quality and ecology.

Chloride levels due to the application of winter road salt threaten the viability and safety of residents and communities that rely on wells for their drinking water supplies. Additionally, increased chloride levels in waterways may lead to reproductive impairment for aquatic organisms and inhibit the growth of subaquatic vegetation necessary for healthy ecosystems. The Hudson Valley's Cary Institute for Ecosystem Studies has conducted extensive research on the impacts of road salt application on water quality across New York State and determined that new technology and management practices are a critical component of addressing this growing crisis.¹ Riverkeeper is supportive of any effort to reduce road salt inputs into the New York City drinking watershed.

This legislation will create a task force charged with offering recommendations for best practices and levels of service that will accomplish reductions in road salt contamination of waterways and groundwater, in addition to maintaining road safety. In addition, this legislation will establish baseline scientific monitoring of road salt pollution to inform the task force and design of future pilot programs. The legislation will allow for NYS DOT to utilize recommendations from the task force in various pilot programs to test the efficacy of recommendations to accomplish the dual goals of the task force.

For these reasons, Riverkeeper strongly supports this legislation to address the growing challenge of road salt contamination in the East-of-Hudson watershed while maintaining road safety.

¹ https://www.caryinstitute.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report_road_salt.pdf