



RIVERKEEPER
NY's clean water advocate

walkkill river
watershed alliance

January 16, 2018

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
New York State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo,

We write to thank you for the commitment in your 2018 State of the State address to focus resources on the issue of Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs), and to ask that you include the Wallkill River in your statewide action plan. Your commitment to assist with understanding the underlying causes of, and identifying solutions to prevent future HABs 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 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 against 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. This portion of these waters is part of the source waters 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.

Please include the Wallkill River in your action plan for addressing Harmful Algal Blooms in 2018.

Sincerely,

Dan Shapley
Water Quality Program Director
Riverkeeper

Jason West
Executive Director
Wallkill River Watershed Alliance