

walkill river watershed alliance

Progress Report on the First Six Months

November 5th, 2015

The Wallkill River Watershed Alliance formed in June 2015, following the Future of the Wallkill River event in April organized by then-New Paltz Mayor Jason West, the NYS DEC Hudson River Estuary Program, Riverkeeper, The Benjamin Center at SUNY New Paltz, the Town of New Paltz Clean Water & Open Space Protection Commission, Mohonk Consultations, and the Hudson River Watershed Alliance.

The mission of the Alliance is to bring the Wallkill River back as a centerpiece of river communities, by restoring water quality, recreational potential, and ecological vitality.

In the first six months, the Wallkill River Watershed Alliance's Southern Ulster County Chapter has held monthly meetings with expert presentations, passed bylaws, established both an advisory board and board of directors, defined a membership of 35, and formed Boat Brigade, Science and Outreach



working groups. Highlights of work to date include:

Boat Brigades

The Alliance launched monthly citizen-led kayak outings in partnership with New Paltz Kayaking Tours, designed to both enjoy the river and to observe and report potential problems. There were seven Boat Brigades in 2015 that explored approximately 25 miles of the Wallkill River between Montgomery and Tillson, reporting algae blooms and an improperly managed construction site, and exploring permitted pollution discharge points and stormwater outfalls.



(Photo by Dan Shapley, Riverkeeper)

Science

After documenting several large algae blooms on the Wallkill this summer, PhD experts on the Alliance's Science Working Group analyzed algae samples, identifying potentially toxic cyanobacteria. The Alliance submitted a report to the Department of Environmental Conservation that will be used to prioritize state efforts to address water quality concerns in the Wallkill River.

(Photo by Rich Piccone, Wallkill River Watershed Alliance)

Outreach

The Alliance established a Web site and an active presence on social media (535 followers on Facebook and Twitter), and published a brochure that was distributed at the annual conference of the Hudson River Watershed Alliance.



(Photo by Emily Vail, Hudson River Estuary Program)

In the Next Six Months and Beyond

The Wallkill River Watershed Alliance plans to:

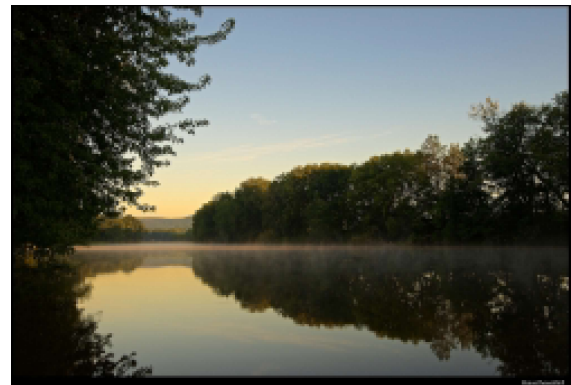
- Establish a fiscal sponsorship relationship with a 501(c)3 organization in order to allow for tax-deductible donations and to pursue grant funding opportunities.
- Host a second Future of the Wallkill River event in Orange County on Dec. 2, in collaboration with Orange County Water Authority, Riverkeeper, NYS DEC Hudson River Estuary Program, The Benjamin Center at

SUNY New Paltz and the Hudson River Watershed Alliance.

- Explore the creation of an Orange County chapter of the Alliance.
- Conduct winter training to improve effectiveness, and host monthly 2016 Boat Brigades in collaboration with New Paltz Kayak Tours starting in the spring
- Identify research priorities and a monitoring plan to focus on water quality concerns, including supporting Riverkeeper's projects to gather community science water quality data and an Estuary Program-funded project to update the Wallkill River watershed management plans
- Develop and distribute video and print products to promote awareness of the river and the Alliance.

Board of Directors

Neil Bettez, Arthur Cemelli,
Jillian Decker, Marty Irwin
Dan Shapley, Secretary-Treasurer
Jason West, Executive Director



(Photo by Michael Neil O'Donnell Photography)