



THE RIVERKEEPER STORY

OUR HISTORY AND PROGRAMS

The Hudson Valley has long been considered the birthplace of the modern environmental movement. It was here in the 1960s that a small group of local fishermen and concerned citizens were determined to reverse the decline of the then near-dead Hudson River by confronting polluters directly.

In 1980, after a 15-year legal battle spearheaded by the Hudson River Fisherman's Association (HRFA) and several other fledgling environmental groups, Consolidated Edison agreed to drop its plans to build a mammoth hydroelectric facility on Storm King Mountain that would have destroyed a major striped bass spawning area. The Storm King case demonstrated how a combination of grassroots organizing and simple enforcement of existing laws could ensure the public of their right to clean water and unspoiled open spaces. With that major victory and a string of other successful lawsuits, HRFA realized they needed a full-time river advocate to safeguard the Hudson River and communities that depend upon it from abuse. In 1983, HRFA launched a boat on the Hudson and inaugurated the first Riverkeeper program.



*View of Storm King Mountain
from Newburgh, NY*

Later that year, Riverkeeper quickly received national attention when it discovered that oil tankers were regularly discharging toxic petrochemicals from their cargo holds into the Hudson River, moving upstream to tank up with clean Hudson water, and selling the water to the Caribbean island of Aruba. Riverkeeper won an historic out-of-court settlement – which helped endow the Hudson River Foundation – and has since brought to justice over 300 additional environmental lawbreakers.

In 1990, Riverkeeper's Chief Prosecuting Attorney, Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., and a team of Riverkeeper attorneys took on rapacious developers and lackluster enforcement agencies in what has become an ongoing battle to halt the degradation of the reservoirs and streams that constitute the water supply for nine million New York City and Westchester County residents.



Riverkeeper's Patrol Boat

At any given time, Riverkeeper is involved with as many as 130 actions to protect the integrity of the Hudson River, its tributaries, the Croton watershed, or other waters that affect New York City's water supply. These actions take the form of litigation; investigations; environmental review of development projects; citizen empowerment projects; regulatory review and comment; and local, state, and federal policy issues. In the past, Riverkeeper has successfully challenged the illegal activities of some of the largest and most notorious polluters, including Mobil, General Electric, Consolidated Edison, Metropolitan Transit Authority, the City of New York, and the New York State Department of Transportation.

Riverkeeper maintains a thirty-six foot wooden patrol and research vessel, the R. Ian Fletcher, operated by our Hudson Riverkeeper, Alex Matthiessen and Boat Captain, John Lipscomb. Riverkeeper's full-time presence on the river enables us to respond to and investigate new reports of illegal discharges, facilitate scientific research on the Hudson, and provide access to the River to our members, public officials, students and the media.

In accomplishing its mission, Riverkeeper and the communities we work with are a showcase of democracy in action. Despite typically overwhelming odds, Riverkeeper proves time and time again how concerned citizens have the power to reclaim their waterways and reclaim control over their communities and quality of life.

HUDSON RIVER PROGRAM

The rebirth of the Hudson River is a model of successful citizen activism. Completing its restoration and repelling new threats demand continuing vigilance. Riverkeeper's Hudson River program includes six campaigns aimed at safeguarding the ecological integrity the Hudson River: Pollution Control and Enforcement, Waterfront Development, Power Plant Fish Kills, GE/PCBs, Public Access, and Clean Boating and Sustainable Fishing. Identifying problems, responding to citizen complaints, devising appropriate solutions and enforcing environmental laws are the heart of our hard-hitting environmental activism. Riverkeeper's Hudson River team is the public's investigator, scientist, lawyer, lobbyist and public relations agent for the River. While we never shy away from taking on the largest and most formidable of polluters, we never forget that our mission is rooted in protecting individual communities from all levels of environmental harm.

WATERSHED PROGRAM

Our Watershed team ensures that the drinking water consumed by 9 million New York City, Westchester, Putnam, Orange and Ulster County residents remains high quality. Riverkeeper accomplishes this through continued monitoring and enforcement of the landmark Watershed Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). Signed in January 1997 by Governor Pataki, New York City Mayor Giuliani, the U.S. EPA Regional Administrator and dozens of officials from state agencies, all levels of government, and our Clean Drinking Water Coalition, the Agreement is a framework for comprehensive watershed protection. This framework requires intense participation and vigilance from local officials, communities, and environmentalists located in New York City and throughout the NYC Watershed. Since 1990, Riverkeeper's Chief Prosecuting Attorney, Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., and his team of attorneys have focused on halting the degradation of New York City's reservoirs by battling sprawl, monitoring water quality, and combating the over-development of steep slopes and wetlands.



The Watershed covers approximately 2,000 square miles of land in the Hudson Valley and Catskill Mountains.



RETIRE INDIAN POINT CAMPAIGN

For six years, Riverkeeper has been working with elected officials and the community to shut down Indian Point. Twenty million people live within the 50-mile "peak injury" zone of Indian Point, located 24 miles north of the Bronx on the banks of the Hudson River in Westchester

County. A large radioactive release triggered by a terrorist attack on or accident at the facility could have devastating health and economic consequences, rendering much of the Hudson River Valley, including New York City, uninhabitable.

Due to the plant's vulnerability to terrorism, a laundry list of safety problems, the storage of 1500 tons of radioactive waste on-site, and the lack of a workable evacuation plan, Riverkeeper has been working toward the permanent shutdown of the Indian Point nuclear power plant. In fall 2006, Riverkeeper launched its Reenergize New York initiative to encourage state leaders to invest in clean replacement power and to encourage New Yorkers to use energy more wisely. In addition, Riverkeeper is working with elected officials and the community to prevent a 20-year license extension for Indian Point 2 & 3, currently licensed until 2013 and 2015, respectively. Despite all the problems and public opposition to the plant, Entergy, the owner/operator, submitted its relicensing application to the NRC on April 30, 2007. On November 30, 2007, Riverkeeper joined New York State in filing formal intervention papers to block the relicensing.

To date over 400 elected officials in three states have called for closure, and over 50 municipalities have passed shutdown resolutions.

WATERKEEPER ALLIANCE

The Waterkeeper Alliance is the umbrella organization for the more than 177 Waterkeeper programs established in the United States and abroad. These groups, which are all modeled after the original Hudson Riverkeeper program, focus on protecting local waterways by employing a variety of strategies to enforce environmental laws and advocate for ecosystem protection. In addition to the United States, Waterkeepers are found along waterways in Canada, Latin America, Europe, and Asia, with more international groups on the way.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Help Riverkeeper protect the Hudson River and the Watershed! Join our Action Alert network and be alerted of important rulings and citizen events. Go to: www.riverkeeper.org and sign-up.

*For more information, contact us at
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