



## Our Representatives' Views for 2020

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## A Conversation with Assemblyman Dan Stec, District 114

The last time the Coalition visited with Assemblyman Dan Stec was in 2013 to advocate for mandatory boat inspections to fight against invasive species. Luckily, the Lake George Park Commission prevailed and mandatory inspections are a fait accompli. This year, we returned to Dan's office to advocate for improving water quality and boat safety on Lake George. This is a partial description of our wide-ranging discussion.

**Coalition:** What is happening on the revised stormwater regulations that the Lake George Park Commission has drafted?

**Dan:** As far as I know, the stormwater regs are ready for approval. A lot of other folks, such as marinas, would like the rules to be issued so that they can begin to deal with them. I suggest that you make inquiries with the Dept. of

Environmental Conservation (DEC) as to when they will be issued. Remember personalized emails and letters are always more effective—they get a personalized response.

**Coalition:** We have been working closely with Supervisor John Strough and the Town of Queensbury on both the site plan review regulation and on the septic property transfer law. We know the issue of septic systems and their contribution to declines in water quality was an issue that you dealt with as supervisor. What chance do you think a mandatory inspection initiative would have?

**Dan:** Whatever issue you deal with, it is important to get community buy in. Residents have to get comfortable with the issues. Queensbury has always been a leader, and I hope it will continue to have a positive influence on others around the Lake.

**Coalition:** According to the latest data, orthophosphate in Lake George has increased 70%, putting algal blooms into overdrive. Isn't it just a matter of time before we have hazardous algal blooms (HAB) in Lake George? In your opinion what is the number one issue for Lake George?

**Dan:** Phosphorus.

**Coalition:** We agree. Reducing phosphorus inputs to the Lake is a prerequisite to improving water quality. Phosphorus comes from wastewater, stormwater and development and can cause algal blooms that impact drinking water taste, odor and health in Lake George. Do you think we are doing enough to reduce phosphorus inputs?

**Dan:** Whatever you think is the issue, make it your priority. Simplify it so we all can understand it. For example, salt—we all understand salt, it's on our table and on our roads. But the impacts of phosphorus are not so obvious.

Coalition: The most obvious impact of too much phosphorus is algal blooms along the shore. The problem is that a plan (such as a TMDL, Total Maximum Daily Load) does not exist to quantify and reduce the amount of phosphorus flowing into Lake George from man-made sources. Here is the Catch 22: because Lake George is a Class AA Special lake, DEC prohibits the introduction of a pollutant such as phosphorus into the Lake; but this also means that DEC would prohibit employing a TMDL plan to help reduce the pollutant load. There is no way to prevent all phosphorus (natural and man-made) from entering the Lake. But it would be possible to reduce man-made sources. One solution is to develop and implement a lake-wide antidegradation plan to reduce phosphorus loading from wastewater, stormwater and development. To date, lake-wide wastewater regulations are unwritten and stormwater and stream corridor regulations need to be significantly improved just to decrease the decline in water quality.

Dan: I see that this could be a predicament. My suggestion to you is that you need some hard data on what it costs to fix a failed septic system if this is the source of some of the phosphorus. You need data to convince residents to take early action which is cheaper than neglecting your system and having to undertake major repairs later.

Coalition: Under Queensbury's septic property transfer law, about 50 systems have been inspected and 60% of those systems were found to be failed systems. Since 75% of the residents around the Lake are dependent on the Lake for drinking water, failed systems pose an important threat. Thank you, Dan, we look forward to working with you on a lake-wide septic initiative and antidegradation plan.

### **A Conversation with Tony Metivier, Queensbury Town Board, Ward 1**

Assembly Point Water Quality Coalition sat down for a fireside chat in the New Year with Tony Metivier, our Town representative for 12 years, who has been instrumental in the passage of important water quality legislation.

Coalition: What is on your agenda for 2020?

Tony: I want to get something done in 2020 regarding wastewater districts for onsite septic systems. I credit the Simms of Dunhams Bay Homeowners Association with one of the most successful organizing initiatives on the Lake. I would like to see the same for a Rockhurst's wastewater district. I think that a wastewater district could be a solution for Assembly Point as well.

Coalition: What do you think about a mandatory septic inspection initiative?

Tony: Unfortunately, the Town attorney has ruled out going on private property to inspect a septic system. However, there is no reason that we could not design a mandatory system with a penalty for non-compliance. But our Town compliance officers are already overloaded with septic inspections resulting from septic property transfer law. So, it is a question of Town resources as well.

Coalition: But isn't that the dilemma? What are we willing to pay to avoid lake degradation which will affect our children and grandchildren?

Tony: Sometimes I think just installing holding tanks might be the best solution.

Coalition: However, holding tanks for new construction are prohibited unless a variance is granted by the local Board of Health. Lastly, do you think that grass roots groups like ours have made any difference?

Tony: Yes! I think you all have been effective. I gave the example of the Simms who spearheaded the creation of the wastewater district and the installation of 17 enhanced treatment units which I think are already having a positive effect on Dunhams Bay water quality.

### DEC Forester visits Assembly Point

On January 10<sup>th</sup>, Jeffrey Speich, Forester and Arborist, visited Assembly Point at the invitation of the Coalition to advise on forest management. As our water quality declines, so too it seems our woodlands are in decline. He noted that there seemed to be overzealous use (clearing and cutting) by some residents on the Point. White pine appears to be regenerating despite the deer but the ash are either dying or will be killed by the Emerald ash borer.

Most importantly, dumping yard waste in the woods is stopping any regeneration and contributing to invasive problems. He observed a number of invasive plants: Asian bittersweet, pachysandra (an escapee from cultivated gardens), privet hedge, bush honeysuckle, knotweed, burning bush, barberry (significant tick habitat) and some grapevines.

After a two hour walk through, Forester Speich thought that there was great potential to manage the property and get the community involved. If the Town of Queensbury applies for a forest inventory and a management plan grant, this area would be a good site.



Burning Bush - invasive



Bush Honeysuckle - invasive



Japanese Knotweed - invasive



Japanese Barberry  
tick habitat and invasive

**Short notes:**

- The Lake George Park Commission have given the necessary approvals for the expansion of the Freedom Boat Club in Dunhams Bay despite Dunhams Bay and areas off Assembly Point being overcapacity in terms of boat density.
- Harrison Freer, Ward 2, has replaced Catherine Atherden on the Queensbury Town Board.
- About 50 septic system inspections have taken place under Queensbury's new property transfer septic inspection regulation and 60% of the systems were found to be failed systems.
- Two Coalition members have been invited to join a new Town of Queensbury committee on low impact development which will assess the Town's zoning rules' strengths and weaknesses.

We extend to you our very best wishes to stay safe and healthy.

Check out our website [assemblypt.com](http://assemblypt.com) and contact us at [apwqc7@gmail.com](mailto:apwqc7@gmail.com)

Please consider a tax-exempt donation to the APWQC.  
APWQC, 35 Knox Road, Lake George, NY 12845

**The Assembly Point Water Quality Coalition, Inc. is a 501c3 nonprofit corporation committed to improving and restoring water quality and compromised ecosystems in the Lake George Lake Champlain Basin by supporting policies, regulations and practices which preserve and protect waters and watersheds.**

Assembly Point Water  
Quality Coalition  
66 Bay Parkway  
Lake George, NY 12845