

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

December 4, 2020

RE: Urgent need for a Lake George Septic Inspection Program to protect water quality

Dear Governor Cuomo,

On November 7, 2020 the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) confirmed the first harmful algal bloom (HAB) on Lake George surrounding Assembly Point. This event has galvanized a number of local politicians, advocacy groups and individuals to join together in an initiative supported by Mayor Robert Blais, Village of Lake George; Supervisor Ron Conover, Town of Bolton; Supervisor Dennis Dickenson, Town of Lake George; and Supervisor John Strough, Town of Queensbury. The HABs outbreak is the result of excessive nutrient loading. The identification of HABs has created an urgent need for a lake-wide septic inspection program for all properties within the Critical Environmental Area (CEA). Our request is a priority because Lake George is listed as a 303(d) impaired waterbody, and has also experienced an increase in chlorophyll *a* concentration, resulting in documented shoreline algal blooms. As you recognized in your 2018 State of the State address, toxic algae is literally endangering the upstate drinking water.

The Water Quality Rapid Response Team, as noted in the DEC published *Harmful Algal Bloom Action Plan for Lake George*, identified the need to, “Implement an inspection and maintenance program for near-shore septic systems”, within 3 years or by 2021.

This priority recommendation is necessary because

- Lake George provides drinking water for residents and visitors throughout the year. Drinking water must be made safe for all.
- The future impact of a decline in Lake George water quality cannot be overstated. Drinking water, health, tourism, recreation and property values are just a few of the assets that would be negatively impacted.

The Town of Queensbury implemented a Septic Inspection Upon Property Transfer Law in January 2019 and a similar law was adopted in the Town of Bolton. In 2019 and 2020 the Town of Queensbury inspected over 100 properties and found that, 80% of the systems failed inspection or were in need of repair. With aging systems and more than 6,000 unmonitored private septic systems within the Lake George watershed, the potential impact of failing systems on our drinking water and water quality is enormous.

Because there are eight towns and one village within three counties in the Lake George watershed, it is critical that a septic inspection program be implemented lake-wide by the state of New York. The time to act is now. A proactive approach would be cost effective in comparison to the economic expense of reversing a polluted Lake George.

As concerned citizens and representatives of our organizations, we respectfully request a meeting with your staff to discuss a lake-wide septic inspection program, and hereby meet the goal you set out for 2021.

Please contact Carol D. Collins, Ph.D., Co-Director, Assembly Point Water Quality Coalition (APWQC), (518) 222-1143; caroldcollins@gmail.com.

Sincerely yours,

Dr Carol D. Collins, Limnologist

Assembly Point Water Quality Coalition: Dr Carol Collins and Dr Lorraine Ruffing, Co-Directors; John J. Collins III, Treasurer; Beverly J. Pozzi, Secretary; Lisa Adamson, Outreach; Robert Carbognin, Chair, Board of Directors: Tom Bechard, Sarah Brown, Lorraine Carbognin, Florence Connor, Arlene Lotters, Mary Helen O'Keefe, Peter Pashler, Eustacia Sander, Robert Tully

Lake Stewardship Group of Cleverdale Steering Committee: Chair, Rosemary Pusateri (Advisory Board of Lake George Land Conservancy); Patricia Burke; Pete Collins; Trisha Lambert Freer; Kim Werther Garry; Bill Mason; Ron Miller; Tom Sargent and Steve Seaboyer, PE (both Co-chairs, Rockhurst Sewer Initiative)

Hague Water Quality Awareness Committee: Al Rider, Chairman; Jim Beaty; Lance Clark; Ginger Kuenzel; Mike Strutz

Lands End Road Association Water Quality Committee at Huletts Landing, Catherine LaBombard, Chair

Barbara Simms, Vice-Chair and Secretary, Advisory Board, North Queensbury Waste Water Disposal District #1

Peter Bauer, Executive Director, Protect the Adirondacks!

William C. Janeway, Executive Director, Adirondack Council

Dr Dean Cook, Advisory Board, Lake George Land Conservancy

Kathy Bozony, Environmental Consultant

Dr Charles Kreitler, Hydrogeochemist

Dr James M. Vail, Environmental Scientist

Laura Hickson, Board, Lake George Historical Association

Nancy C. Howland, Pilot Knob

cc: Senator Kirsten Gillibrand; Senator Charles Schumer; Congresswoman Elise Stefanik; State Senator Betty Little; State Senator Neil Breslin; State Senate Majority Leader Andrea Steward-Cousin; State Assemblyman Dan Stec; State Assemblyman-elect Matthew Simpson; Supervisor Claudia Braymer, Warren County; Supervisor John Strough, Town of Queensbury; Mayor Robert Blais, Village of Lake George; Supervisor Dennis Dickinson, Town of Lake George; Supervisor Ron Conover, Town of Bolton; Supervisor Edna Frasier, Town of Hague; Supervisor Samuel Hall, Town of Fort Ann; Supervisor Joseph Giordano, Town of Ticonderoga; Supervisor Paul Ferguson, Town of Dresden; Supervisor Darrell Wilson, Town of Putnam; Basil Seggos, Commissioner DEC; Amanda Lefton, First Assistant Secretary for Energy and the Environment; Jim Tierney, Deputy Commissioner, Office of Water Resources, DEC; Bruce Young, Chair, Lake George Park Commission; Dave Wick, Executive Director, Lake George Park Commission; David Miller, Adirondack Council; Jamie Brown, Executive Director, Lake George Land Conservancy; Michael O'Reilly, President, Lake George Land Conservancy; Chris Navitsky, Lake George Waterkeeper; Eric Siy, Executive Director, FUND for Lake George; Jeff Killeen, Chair, FUND for Lake George; Walt Lender, Executive Director, Lake George Association; Peter Menzies, President, Lake George Association; Rick

Relyea, Director, Darrin Fresh Water Institute; Dr Sandra Nierzwicki-Bauer, Associate Director Darrin Fresh Water Institute