



## ASSEMBLY POINT WATER QUALITY COALITION

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## Septic Inspection Initiative Gathers Momentum

The Assembly Point Water Quality Coalition (APWQC) has not allowed COVID to hold us back from working to protect Lake George's water quality. We have continued to hold meetings via Zoom with like-minded lake stewards in Cleverdale, Rockhurst, Hague and Huletts Landing as well as with elected officials and the Lake George Park Commission (LGPC). The perspectives from different parts of the Lake have been helpful; our Hague resident, Ginger Kuenzel, notes that sewer use fees in Hague far exceed any fee that would be charged for a septic inspection. Residents within sewer districts are already doing their part and paying to protect the Lake. It is now time for those with septic systems to do the same.

We shared with you, our letter to Governor Cuomo, in the Winter Newsletter 15 where we requested the implementation of a lake-wide septic inspection program as called for in his 2018 Lake George Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB) Action Plan. The Governor's response came in the form of a rebuttal from Dave Wick, Executive Director of the LGPC. Wick stated that more study was needed. Our lake-wide group subsequently met with the Park Commissioners, who requested us to review approximately 100 septic inspection records resulting from Queensbury's *Septic Inspection Upon Property Transfer Law*. The review showed the range of problems found, the price tag associated with required repairs, and the fact that all property owners willingly cooperated with the inspections, realizing the importance of protecting water quality. These findings were presented to the Park Commissioners.

Our group also issued the *Lake George Septic Inspection White Paper* detailing the need for a lake-wide inspection and management program. This paper includes existing inspection programs in New York State, the LGPC legislative authority to conduct such inspections and the possible elements of such a program. The White Paper can be found on our website: [Assemblypt.com](http://Assemblypt.com). Carol Collins also submitted technical comments, on behalf of APWQC, on the LGPC's new Stormwater and Stream Corridor Regulations.

The Department of Environmental Conservation is in the process of updating its 2018 Lake George Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB) Action Plan and the APWQC submitted priority recommendations for more effective protective actions and notification system.



Photo illustration by Jeff Boyer/ Times Union

Several of our group members have connected with members of the press; see Adirondack Explorer Jan/Feb 2021 article [Green and Pristine?](#), the Times Union May 9, 2021 [Algal Blooms on Lake George Prompt Calls for Septic Monitoring](#), and the Times Union Editorial May 12, 2021 [Lake Septic](#).

We met with our elected representatives, Assemblyman Matt Simpson and James Tierney, DEC Deputy Commissioner for Water Resources. Both were very supportive of our septic initiative. Tierney was surprised to learn that a NYS/USEPA *Nine Element Plan to Restore and Protect our Waters* **does not exist for Lake George**. A Nine Element Watershed Plan would identify and quantify pollutants, determine the water quality goals and develop a plan to achieve the pollutant reduction. The most important element would be implementation of a plan to protect Lake George from further degradation.

Tierney also suggested that we ask the various town boards around the lake to pass resolutions calling on the Park Commission to undertake septic inspections and management. To date, the Towns of Hague, Lake George, Ticonderoga and the Village of Lake George have passed the resolution (see box).

#### Draft Resolution

Whereas, the Town (or Village) recognizes that Lake George is the economic engine for our region and that visitors are attracted by the lake's crystal clear waters; and

Whereas, residents and visitors rely on Lake George for their drinking water; and

Whereas, failing and poorly maintained septic systems around lake George impact the lake's water quality, thereby threatening not only people's health but also the region's economic viability; and

Whereas, the need for a lake-wide septic inspection program has been identified by multiple task forces, watershed coalitions, surveys and initiatives since the 1980s;

**Now, therefore, be it RESOLVED, that the Town (or Village) Board hereby requests the Lake George Park Commission, as the entity empowered by the state to adopt rules and regulations for the collection, treatment and discharge of wastewater within the Lake George Park, to take the necessary steps to develop the framework for a lake-wide septic inspection program.**

It is on the agendas of several of the remaining town boards including Queensbury and Bolton Landing. Town of Queensbury Supervisor John Strough wrote an important Op-Ed essay in the Times Union May 1, 2021 [Old Septic Systems a Threat to the Lake](#), emphasizing the lack of urgency by the state and the need to take immediate steps to create this program. Mayor Blais generously offered to urge the other town boards to pass the resolution.

We are looking forward to the return of summer residents so that we can share the progress we have made and gather more support for getting an inspection program underway. Our initiative is gaining momentum as all realize it is past time to do all we can to protect the Lake.

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### Short notes

- Work is under way on APWQC's new book, *Stewards of the Water*, which spans 130 years of lake-activism. Volunteers are needed to assist; if you are interested please contact [lorraineruffing@hotmail.com](mailto:lorraineruffing@hotmail.com).
- The Green Amendment was approved by state legislators and will be on our ballots this coming November for passage into law. It gives all New Yorkers the right to clean air, water and a healthy ecosystem. Among the many residential and organizational supporters are the Adirondack Mountain Club and the Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter. Assemblyman Matt Simpson and Queensbury Supervisor John Strough also supported the amendment.
- New York State has established a [Septic System Replacement Fund Program](#) to provide funding to replace cesspools and septic systems.

**The Assembly Point Water Quality Coalition, Inc. is a 501c3 non-profit 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.**

Please consider a tax-exempt donation to the APWQC. Reach us at [apwqc7@gmail.com](mailto:apwqc7@gmail.com)



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