

Call for \$1.2M study into toxic algae in Wallkill River

Monday

Posted Mar 6, 2017 at 8:40 PM

Updated Mar 6, 2017 at 8:40 PM

By [Pauline Liu](#)

Times Herald-Record

[Follow](#)

NEW PALTZ - With the state budget deadline looming, environmental advocacy groups and municipalities are voicing their support for a proposed state and federally funded study into the toxic algae blooms on the Wallkill River.

The neon green blooms made their appearance in the summer in both August 2015 and August 2016.

They spread across 30 miles of river and remained for several weeks.

They led to warnings that the toxins could be harmful to people, dogs or other pets, livestock and wildlife from ingestion, skin contact or inhalation.

The \$1.2 million plan is known as Enhanced Water Quality Monitoring and Modeling in the Wallkill River Watershed.

It was developed by both the state Department of Environmental Conservation and the U.S. Geological Survey. The state's share of the cost would be \$800,000.

The New Paltz town board threw its support behind the study last week.

"The blooms certainly hurt, because people could not kayak, swim or fish and missed out on a part of the season," said New Paltz Supervisor Neil Bettez.

Among those who felt the impact of the toxic algae was Craig Chapman of New Paltz Kayaking Tours, since he was unable to put his kayaks in the water during the bloom.

"Financially, it was a big hit to me," said Chapman, who is backing the study.

"That bothered me, but it was worse to think about how bad the water quality has gotten."

Jason West of the Wallkill River Watershed Alliance said that large amount of nutrients from sewage and runoff have "transformed it into a river of poison."

Both the Alliance and Riverkeeper said the study is important to saving the river.

"There is no other river in New York state with this kind of episode, and we think the Wallkill deserves special attention," said Dan Shapley, Riverkeeper's water quality program director.

The environmental groups believe the proposal has bi-partisan backing. Sen. John Bonacic, R-Mount Hope, is among its supporters.

A Wallkill River Summit will be held from 5:30-7:30 p.m. March 28 at the SUNY New Paltz Student Union Building to discuss what the community can do to curb pollution in the Wallkill River.

The event will bring together scientists, environmental groups and elected officials.

pliu@th-record.com

