

Watershed Alliance takes to Boat Brigade in Wallkill River

TOWN OF WALLKILL – Members of the Wallkill Watershed Alliance were hoping to pull over 100 tires from the river during their second annual Tire Pull on Saturday.

Last year, 97 tires were recovered from the Wallkill in the group's effort to clean up the waterway.

Ten volunteers took to the river in a "Boat Brigade" on Saturday.



Alliance members take to the Wallkill in their effort to recover t

The event was organized by Arthur Cemelli, whose wife, Brenda, explained why she believes many tires have wound up in the river.

"It could be dumping from years ago, but there is a large number of tires to think that there wasn't a point where somebody just dumped them to dispose of them in the river," she said.

Town of New Paltz Supervisor Neil Bettez offered his own explanation for the pollution in the river. He believes tires are only a part of the problem.

"Wallkill is no different from most rivers around," he said. "It's death by a thousand cuts; you have runoff from parking lots, roads, leaky sewer pipes. The big culprits we see are excessive nutrients and bacteria from a human origin."

Jason West, the former mayor of the Village of New Paltz and president of the alliance, said he got involved in cleaning up the Wallkill River and other polluted bodies of water in the area as one of his list of projects. "My last year in office, I

wanted to pull the trigger in doing something about it.”

Bettez hopes for a brighter future for the river.

“Our goal is to increase the number of good days from the number of bad days,” he said. “I think the Wallkill River does not have the same daunting problems as the Hudson River, and in 20 years you will see a big difference here.”

“My hope for the Wallkill is for people to swim in the river, to eat the fish we catch in it, to have a living partner in our communities we can better appreciate,” added West.

The Wallkill River Watershed Alliance was formed in April 2015. It was launched after a summit on cleaning the Wallkill River was held in SUNY New Paltz, and primarily founded to restore the river to its former state.

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