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Wallkill River Watershed Alliance uses a boat brigade to pull tires from waterway

By Mid-Hudson News Network

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TOWN OF WALLKILL, N.Y. >> Members of the Wallkill River Watershed Alliance set out to pull 100 discarded tires from the Wallkill River in the second annual Tire Pull.

Ten volunteers took to the river in a “Boat Brigade” on Saturday. Last year, 97 tires were recovered from the Wallkill River in the group’s effort to clean up the waterway.

Saturday’s 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 [too] large a 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 said 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, president of the alliance, said he got involved in cleaning the Wallkill River and other polluted bodies of water in the area while serving as mayor of the village of New Paltz.

“My last year in office (2007), I wanted to pull the trigger in doing something about it,” he said.

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,” West said, “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.”

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

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