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New York News

4:52 PM THU JANUARY 16, 2014

NY, 6 Communities Agree On Sewage Cleanup Plan

By [DAVE LUCAS](#) (@PEOPLE/DAVE-LUCAS)

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Sewage pollution in the Hudson River at Albany will be reduced under a \$136 million plan announced Thursday by New York State environmental regulators, the city of Albany and five other surrounding communities.

A cleaner future for the Hudson River in 15 years? Officials say it's do-able. Under an agreement with the Department of Environmental Conservation, a coalition of six communities will upgrade sewer systems to reduce discharges of storm water-diluted sewage after heavy rain.



http://mediad.publicbroadcasting.net/wamc/files/201401/IMG_20140116_130225410.jpg
Credit WAMC Photo [Enlarge image](http://mediad.publicbroadcasting.net/wamc/files/201401/IMG_20140116_130225410.jpg)

by Dave Lucas

DEC presser at Jennings's Landing - Albany Mayor Kathy Sheehan is at the podium, Commissioner Joe Martens directly behind her.

DEC Commissioner Joe Martens says the Hudson is the most important river in America. "The cities of Albany, Troy, Rensselaer, Cohoes, Watervliet and the Village of Green Island all stepped up to sign this agreement. They signed it over the course and their legislatures approved it over the course of the last month or so. I signed it yesterday. So we finally have an order and a long-term control plan to address something we refer to in the business as CSO's - in a nutshell, when a sewage treatment plant is inundated with runoff from storm water or snow melt, and the sewage that is collected from all the communities around the Hudson, it goes into one

system. The waste water plant can't handle it. What it can't handle goes right into the river."

Among the planned upgrades are new bacterial disinfection systems and projects to separate some sewage lines from storm-water lines.

Paul Gallay is with the environmental group Riverkeeper, which for years has tracked Hudson River water quality from Troy to New York City. He says this new agreement completely overshadows one conceived earlier. "They literally doubled the amount of combined sewer overflow, the rainwater and sewage they're gonna keep out of this system. An extra 325 million gallons above and beyond the original 2011 plan, This plan gets it right. This is about clean water. It's fishable, drinkable, swimmable rivers. That's what we need in this country if we're gonna maintain our greatness."

Martens sees the plan as a milestone toward the goal of making the river healthier for fishing, kayaking, swimming and other recreation. When asked "when does the initiative begin" Martens replied "it already has."

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