Pooled Efforts = Cleaner Hudson River

By DAVE LUCAS (/PEOPLE/DAVE-LUCAS) • 23 HOURS AGO

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Representatives of the County Executives for Albany and Rensselaer Counties and Majority Leaders of each County's legislature will highlight several multi-million dollar improvements at both County wastewater treatment plants and pump station facilities.

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Six Albany-area communities along the Hudson River are collaborating to improve water quality. The partnership is resulting in the development of a regional solution to a series of local problems.

Albany, Troy, Cohoes, Rensselaer, Watervliet and the Village of Green Island have banded together. The collective, under the banner "Albany Pool Communities," has been working to address combined sewer overflows, pooling resources toward the goals of greater efficiency and reducing costs. Efforts began in earnest in January 2014, when the group made a pact with the state Department of Environmental Conservation to diminish the after-effects of discharges into the Hudson River.

Jim Tierney is the assistant Commissioner for Water Resources at the DEC. "This event is really a progress report, and it's a positive progress report on efforts to get combined sewer overflows reduced in the Albany Pool Communities. That's basically this area around Albany and Troy, Rensselaer and Watervliet, that has a problem with old sewer pipes where water, storm water, flows into the same pipes we use to transmit sewage. And in big storms, they get flooded and they blow out. So there's a large consent order and plan that's been put in place, an engineered plan, to reduce that from happening to improve water quality. This gets sewage, trash, pathogens, contaminants out of the water, and is part of an overall effort to fill the promise of the Clean Water Act: the fishable Hudson, the swimmable Hudson, and restoring the integrity of the nation's waters."

Chris Meyer is Deputy County Executive of Rensselaer County: "These projects are instrumental to improving the water quality in the Hudson River, but also by providing capacity for our businesses looking to expand here or move here, and create the jobs and economic vitality that's crucial to all of our residents."

The Rensselaer County Sewer District has been modernizing its treatment plant and pumping stations, including installation of UV disinfection technology that can treat more than 63 million gallons a day of wastewater. Upgrades in Albany County have enabled treatment of more than 130 million gallons a day. County Spokesperson Mary Rozak: "In order to have a clean Hudson River, we needed the sewer districts to be working together, to make sure that any and all effluent that's coming in is being properly sanitized and done to the point where when water is then discharged, it is safe for folks to be in the Hudson River."

Rozak says it's not out of the question to believe that one day there will be beaches along the Hudson that Capital Region families can enjoy.

Riverkeeper Water Quality Program Manager Dan Shapley says his group is encouraged by the significant work that the Pool Communities have accomplished to date: "We all have to keep our eyes on the stated goal: Water that's safe for swimming. That's something that we need to accomplish, both for the river and those living near it in the Capital District. We already know there are people using the river for swimming, for tubing, for other forms of recreation all the time and we need to make sure the water quality is safe for those activities."

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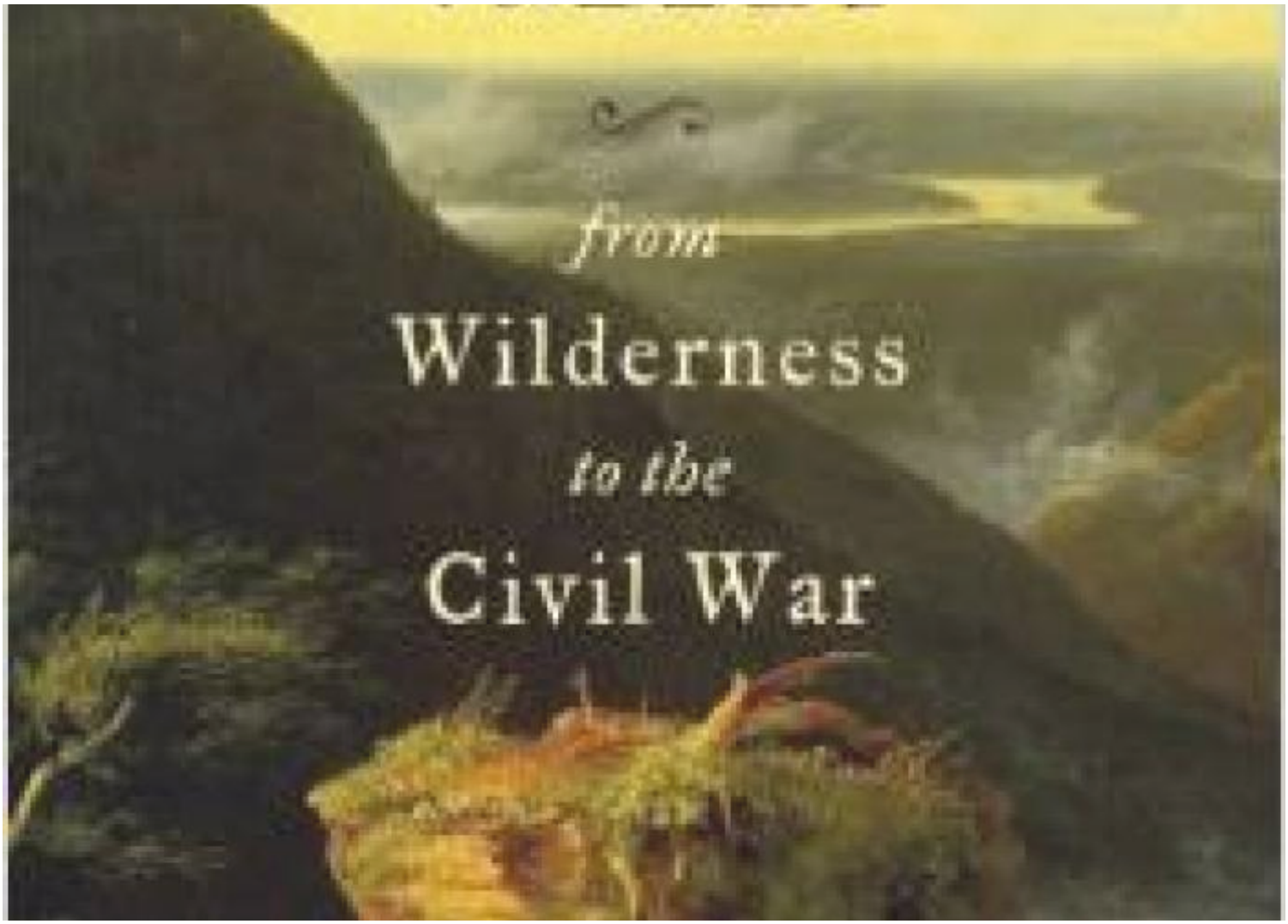

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