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**CLEAN WATER ADVOCATES AND ENVIRONMENTALISTS ANNOUNCE THE
FORMATION OF THE WESTCHESTER COALITION FOR CLEAN WATER
(WCCW)**

New coalition calls for clean, healthy, sewage- and trash-free waterways

June 29, 2024 (YONKERS, NY) - The Westchester Coalition For Clean Water, (WCCW), announces its formation at today's Summer Riverfront Kickoff at Habirshaw Park on the Hudson in Yonkers. WCCW is committed to achieving, maintaining, and protecting clean water in all of Westchester's waterways for all community members now and for the future.

The coalition has formed to push for greater actions by Westchester County and local governments on issues including water pollution from our sewers, flooding from stormwater, safe fishing and shellfishing and increasing access to our waterfronts. WCCW is calling for all waterways in Westchester to be clean and healthy, free of trash and sewage, and flood resilient within 10 years.

WCCW membership includes Riverkeeper, Sarah Lawrence College Center for the Urban River at Beczak (CURB), Federated Conservationists of Westchester County, Groundwork Hudson Valley, Bronx River Alliance, the Citizens Advisory Committee of the Long Island Sound Study, Yonkers Paddling and Rowing Club, and Beczak Environmental Education Center. These organizations, who have been working together as partners in water quality monitoring and as members of the Westchester Climate Crisis Task Force Water Committee, agree that a stronger focus on water health and safety is needed in Westchester, especially in light of the increased stress that climate change is placing on our water infrastructure, including increased storms and sea level rise.

Today's announcement took place on the waterfront in Yonkers where the wastewater treatment plant discharges untreated and partially treated sewage into the Hudson River when it rains. So far in 2023 alone, this County-owned treatment plant has discharged over 800 million gallons of partially treated sewage into the Hudson. The Yonkers plant takes the wastewater from the rivertowns upstream and the discharges pollute the river and leave solid waste on the Yonkers waterfront.

Riverkeeper President and Hudson Riverkeeper Tracy Brown, a WCCW co-chair said, "In the face of our changing environmental conditions and our aging infrastructure, it is concerning that Westchester is not sufficiently prioritizing clean and healthy water for all of our residents. I am grateful to have a coalition dedicated to this critical work and look forward to putting clean, healthy, and accessible water at the top of the priority list for our local and county governments." She added, "Each of our members are leading advocates and protectors of the waters they serve. By coming together as a coalition, our individual voices and efforts are amplified exponentially, allowing us to assess and meet all of the challenges facing Westchester's waterways."

NY Co-chair of the Citizens Advisory Committee of the Long Island Sound Study, Nancy Seligson, a WCCW co-chair, said, "Events like these showcase the beauty of Westchester's waterways, the Hudson, the Long Island Sound and all the lakes, rivers, ponds and tributaries in between. These treasures have to be protected from sewage and other pollutants that are detrimental to our environment and pose health risks to Westchester residents."

The Director of the Sarah Lawrence College Center for the Urban River at Beczak, Ryan Palmer, said "I'm excited this coalition will push forward much needed improvements to the county's sewer system. For far too long Yonkers has borne the brunt of sewage pollution, receiving waste from over half a million residents from over 20 miles away, and often ending up in the river at our doorstep as Combined Sewer Overflow. This legacy environmental injustice must be corrected."

Executive Director of the Bronx River Alliance, Siddhartha Sanchez, said "Despite decades of successful restoration efforts and investment in the Bronx River watershed, uncontrolled sewage pollution in Westchester County continues to jeopardize the health of both the Bronx River and its surrounding communities. Our watershed residents, especially in environmental justice communities, deserve to be able to enjoy these beautiful natural resources without fearing for their health."

Managing Director of the Federated Conservationists of Westchester County, Jane Curtis, said "The Federated Conservationists of Westchester County (FCWC), a 60-year steward of the environment, has seen the exponential effect that our current climate emergency

has created with extreme rain events resulting in flooding that exacerbates the discharge of contaminated wastewater into our rivers. In response, all of us, as stewards of our natural resources, must immediately address our inadequate, antiquated water and sewer infrastructure with the unprecedented funding now available to us from state and federal sources."

Former Mayor of Larchmont Village, Lorraine Walsh, said "Stormwater and sewage issues do not respect boundaries, yet each local municipality currently handles its own system, often without consideration of the bigger picture. WCCW's campaign for a regional, county-wide approach would help coordinate the efforts of local and county governments, provide increased access to capital funding, create economies of scale and improve the regular maintenance and upgrades of system infrastructure."

Executive Director of Groundwork Hudson Valley, Oded Holzinger, said "Intensifying flood events, degradation of the natural habitat, and compromised water quality are all climate and environmental hazards that are interconnected and know no municipal boundaries. Westchester County is home to some of the most densely populated watersheds in New York, many of them flow in the direction of the most climate vulnerable communities, making this an environmental justice issue. This is why the formation of this coalition is so crucial for bringing together key stakeholders to provide comprehensive solutions."

President of Beczak Environmental Education Center, Marcia Cooper, said, "It is of utmost importance to replace and/or upgrade current sewage and stormwater infrastructure that dates from the 1800's as well as the Sewage Treatment Plants in the area to ensure the health and well being of the waterways. The public health and environment is currently at risk and now is the time to solve this problem. Keep sewage and stormwater separate."

Commodore of the Yonkers Paddling and Rowing Club, Lee Wordsman, said, "The Hudson River and its tributaries are a unique and wonderful resource. Our members have primary contact with the River and we are committed to seeing the River protected and nurtured. Anyone that has spent time on the River knows that it is a very special place. Having grown up along the Waterfront, I've seen the improvements that have been made but more can be done. Imagine a Hudson River that is known for its high water quality."

Senate Majority Leader, Andrea Stewart-Cousins, said, "As we face the challenges of climate change, the Westchester Coalition for Clean Water is a vital step forward. This coalition's goals align with the achievements we've made in the '24-25 NY State budget, such as securing \$500 million for the Clean Water Infrastructure Grant program, bolstering the Environmental Protection Fund, authorizing over \$60 million in bond funds to Yonkers' sewage treatment plant, and funding initiatives like NY SWIMS to enhance recreational water facilities. These investments will help ensure that all of Westchester's waterways are sewage- and

trash-free, flood-resilient, and accessible to all. I commend the dedication of the coalition members in their efforts to create a sustainable and vibrant future for Westchester County.”

Assemblyman Steve Otis, a leader in supporting state clean water grant programs, said, “We should all celebrate this new coalition of groups focused on the urgency of improving our clean water infrastructure. Increased rainfall in storm events that cause flooding and consistently rising temperatures which degrade water quality are both warning signs. We need to accelerate the pace of clean water infrastructure projects to protect against storm damage and pollution of our waterways. The coalition will work with local officials to advance this agenda.”

Westchester County Legislator, Hon. Shanae Williams, said, “As a Westchester County Legislator, I commend the Westchester Coalition for Clean Water on their vital initiative to protect our waterways. The commitment to clean, healthy water for all residents is crucial, especially as we face increasing challenges from climate change. Together with these esteemed organizations, we will work tirelessly to ensure a sustainable and resilient future for Yonkers and Westchester County as a whole.”

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Westchester Coalition For Clean Water is comprised of clean water advocates and environmentalists working in Westchester. Our mission is to restore and protect clean water in Westchester’s waterways for all community members now and into the future. We envision a Westchester where the county’s waterways are clean and healthy, trash- and sewage-free, and flood resilient within 10 years.