



**SAW KILL WATERSHED
COMMUNITY**

NEWSLETTER

Issue 11: October 8th, 2020

*Protecting the Saw Kill watershed and its ecological, recreational,
and historic resources through hands-on science, education, and advocacy.*



A NOTE FROM: SKWC LEADERSHIP TEAM

As we head into election season, the issues that consume the daily news cycle can be overwhelming. Right now our lives are dominated by the COVID-19 pandemic: Staying healthy and economically viable and sustaining our education system are at the top of the priorities list. But other issues that directly affect our health and well being—like climate change and toxic contaminants in our air and water—are problems that do not go away even though we don't see them in the headlines on a daily basis.

The science that provides the basis of our understanding about water issues (e.g. water pollution, aquifer depletion, flooding) is reliable— despite confusion about facts often generated by partisan politics. We are committed to supporting that science, exploring solutions to water problems, and keeping a spotlight on water issues. The people who represent us in local, state, and federal offices will make decisions that affect our health and safety— but it is up to us to hold them accountable.

The candidates in the upcoming election have many issues to contend with, and we would like to ensure that water receives a high level of attention. It's important to know where the people we elect to represent us stand, so we recently sent a questionnaire about water issues to each of our local, state, and federal candidates. The responses we received are printed in this newsletter.

Make sure you participate in the 2020 election: every vote counts.

Important Voting Reminders

You have to [register to vote](#) before Election Day in New York. New York State deadline for registering, and re-registering if you moved since the last Election, is this [Friday, October 9th!](#)

[Check your registration status.](#)

[Register to vote](#)

Early Voting

New York voters can also vote before Election Day. The early voting period runs from Saturday, October 24, 2020 to Sunday, November 1, 2020, but dates and hours may vary based on where you live. Look up your county's Board of Elections website for more information.

[Early voting locations in Dutchess County.](#)

[Early voting locations in Ulster County.](#)

[Early voting locations in Columbia County.](#)

What to bring when you vote:

If you've voted in New York before, you don't need to provide ID to vote.

If you're a first-time voter who registered by mail, and didn't provide a copy of your ID with your registration, you may need to show ID to vote. Acceptable forms include: a current and valid photo ID; or a copy of a current utility bill, bank statement, government check, paycheck, or other government document that shows your name and address. Voters without ID: If you are unable to provide ID, you will be able to vote an affidavit ballot.

Vote by Mail

Review the [absentee ballot application](#) and confirm that you meet the eligibility requirements for voting absentee. Fill out the application completely. Submit the request to your local election office. You should request your ballot as far in advance of the election as possible. The deadline to request a ballot by mail is (received by) Tuesday, October 27, 2020. When your ballot arrives, read it carefully and follow the instructions to complete it and return it.

Candidate Responses

We appreciate the time it takes to run for office. To the candidates that were able to respond to the following questions—we extend our thanks for that extra time. If we receive additional responses, we will send them out as soon as possible as addenda to this Newsletter. Each of the following responses from candidates is taken verbatim and in its entirety from the responses sent to us.

NEW YORK STATE

New York State Assembly, District 106

The New York State Assembly has a total of 150 seats. The 106th District represents people from Ghent to parts of Poughkeepsie, including Milan.

Didi Barrett (D, Incumbent)

For specific information about her environmental goals and vision, please see <https://www.didibarrett.com/issues-continued>.

Dean Michael (R)

His positions on these issues are detailed at <https://www.dean4ny.com/issues>.

New York State Assembly, District 103

The New York State Assembly has a total of 150 seats. The 103rd District represents people from Red Hook, Rhinebeck, Kingston, New Paltz, and Woodstock.

Kevin Cahill (D, Incumbent)

For more information, please see <https://www.assembly.ny.gov/mem/Kevin-A-Cahill>.

Rex Bridges (R, C)

For more information, please see Rex Bridges for Assembly on Facebook.

New York State Senate, District 41

New York Senate District 41 is one of the 63 state senate districts. It comprises almost all of Dutchess County and the western half of Putnam County. It overlaps with New York's Congressional Districts 18 and 19. State Senator Sue Serino has represented the district since 2015.

Sue Serino (R, Incumbent)

Senator Serino's campaign website is <https://www.sueserino.com/>.

Karen Smythe (D)

Investing in the Hudson Valley's drinking water infrastructure and encouraging regenerative farming practices are also mentioned in her environmental issues campaign webpage, found at <https://karen4nysenate.com>.

Question 1: NY State currently protects wetlands that are larger than 12.4 acres. However, this represents only a fraction of the state's wetlands. Small wetlands are critical for both water quality protection and flood mitigation--currently most of them are not protected by either state or federal regulations. Do you support state legislation to protect wetlands smaller than 12.4 acres?

Barrett: Wetlands are a vital ecological resource in the Hudson Valley and across the state, and I support legislation to protect wetlands through DEC oversight. I have voted to pass A03658, which gives DEC authority to regulate wetlands of 1 acre or more. These fragile ecosystems provide so many benefits to our communities and our environment, and protecting and preserving them is paramount to the success of the Hudson River.

Michael: We, in the Town of Clinton, created a law about 10 years ago reducing protected wet lands requiring a wetlands application down to ½ acre. I do believe in protecting our environmentally critical areas.

Cahill: For more information, please visit: <https://www.assembly.ny.gov/mem/Kevin-A-Cahill>.

Bridges: For more information, please see: Rex Bridges for Assembly on Facebook.

Serino: For more information, please visit: <https://www.sueserino.com/>.

Candidate Responses

Smythe: I would support state legislation that would add more protections to protect wetlands smaller than 12.4 acres. Wetlands are critically important for the protection of biodiversity, environmental resilience, and climate change. Senate bill S7366 would provide the Department of Environmental Conservation additional regulatory authority over freshwater wetlands of one acre or more. This added authority would help New York State combat the federal environmental rollbacks from the Trump Administration.

Question 2: Do you support state measures to protect NY waters from harmful chemicals not currently regulated by the federal government (including emerging contaminants like PFAS) and limit or ban their use in NY?

Barrett: Yes. I have always been a strong supporter of clean water in NYS. I have consistently held GE and state agencies accountable for the PCB and industrial pollution in the Hudson River. In recent years, I've supported legislation to ban PFAS in fire fighting foam (commonly used at airports and military bases in NYS) and in food packaging. I also support a lower limit on PFAS parts per billion in bodies of water used for drinking water.

Michael: PFAS are very common and may be difficult to completely eliminate from our state. I would be willing to come up with a solution to reduce the use and protect our wetlands from the introduction of any new PFAS but would have to look at a commonsense plan that we can implement.

Smythe: Emerging contaminants of concern including PFAS don't easily break down in the environment and can bioaccumulate and persist in humans and wildlife for decades. These contaminants are often found in everyday products like nonstick pans, clothing, common medication, and more. This is why I support New York State's adoption of new standards for 1,4-Dioxane, PFO and PFOS. The regulations have made New York one of the most progressive states for drinking water standards and will help reduce environmental harm in future generations. However, more work needs to be done. I am committed to moving New York forward with aggressive actions to address drinking water quality by researching emerging contaminants and prescribing policies to reduce their release into our environments.

Question 3: What is your position on construction of new fossil fuel infrastructure in NY State, e.g. natural gas plants and pipelines, and transportation that carries oil and gas through our communities and along our waterways? What measures should we take as a state to reduce our use of fossil fuels?

Barrett: I fought for a fracking ban in NY State and against the use of fracking liquids. I carried the bill to keep oil barges off the Hudson River. I do not support any increase in fossil fuel infrastructure. I hope that the implementation of the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act will provide a pathway to create jobs and develop green initiatives that will lower fossil fuel use across the state while ensuring the sustainability of our farms and rural communities.

Candidate Responses

Michael: I am willing to look at any means of providing a sustainable source of energy as well as cutting our usage through the use of LED. As a Town Board member we just signed an agreement to update all of our lighting with LED. We also signed an agreement for community solar. We have added solar panels to our highway garage over the past 15 years. We converted our Town Heating systems to geothermal. So have a proved track record on this issue.

Smythe: I believe that New York State should no longer be investing in fossil fuel infrastructure. Fossil fuel infrastructure is increasingly becoming antiquated, the cost of building out new infrastructure is increasingly outweighing the benefit, and the buildout of new infrastructure would be a step in the wrong direction when trying to achieve the emissions reductions targets of the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act. I support climate-smart policies that encourage investment in renewable energies, battery technologies, clean microgrids, and more. Further, New York State should be charging fossil fuel power plants the social cost of carbon that they are now releasing free of charge. These fees could help animate the transition from fossil fuels to clean energy, create jobs, and fund environmental programs like the Restore Mother Nature Act.

Question 4: What is your position on the Restore Mother Nature bond act?

Barrett: Sadly, the Environmental Bond Act will not move forward this year. I supported the Bond Act and believed it would be a good catalyst for environmental progress in NYS. While I'm sympathetic to the current public health and state fiscal situation, I look forward to advocating for a new Environmental Bond Act in the near future.

Michael: I am not fully up on the full impact so I will have to see the details because they say the devil is in the details, but I do support improving our flood risks. We had one dam in town that cost the homeowner \$100,000 to remove so I am also concerned about the burden this may cause.

Smythe: I support the Restore Mother Nature Act. To protect New York State's resiliency against the constant threat of the climate crisis, we need to invest in critically important climate-smart programs that protect and restore wildlife, reduce extreme weather event risks on communities, and prepare New York for the future. When elected, I will work tirelessly to ensure that programs including the Mother Nature Bond Act are funded and our environment can be preserved.

Question 5: What steps would you take to help New York meet its stated goals of limiting statewide greenhouse gas emissions to 40% of 1990 levels by 2030 and 85% by 2050?

Barrett: Systemic change is needed to achieve the large reduction goals we have set for ourselves. We need to ramp up the state's capacity to produce renewable energy, drastically cut fossil fuels, and take a hard look at how every economic sector can play a role in achieving these goals. Given the Hudson Valley's agricultural roots, I have long worked to incentivize the practice of "carbon farming," or regenerative agriculture. The Ag sector is a major carbon emitter, but through a combination of cutting-edge research and time-tested practices, this sector has the potential to be part of the solution rather than part of the problem. Through carbon farming practices, which include no-till farming, strategic cover cropping, rotational grazing, carbon capture monitoring and many others, farmers can reduce the amount of greenhouse gases being emitted through farming, and instead turn farmland into a carbon sink, which means the land is absorbing more Greenhouse Gas than it is emitting.

Candidate Responses

Barrett (cont.): Through carbon sequestration, farmers and society receive numerous co-benefits in the form of healthier, more productive soils, less ag runoff into our water bodies, less erosion, better irrigation and flood control, and other benefits. To help further this effort, I secured state funding for and helped create the Hudson Valley Carbon Farming Pilot Program, which is currently ongoing in five Hudson Valley counties. This pilot program will provide data that informs policymakers and farmers about the best ways to sequester carbon in agricultural soils, and will be used for future expansion of carbon farming in New York. I have also worked locally to promote carbon farming within the farming community and spoken about it at national conferences. I sponsor the Carbon Farming Act in the Assembly.

Michael: I do not like large fields of solar panels and feel that in many cases it has stolen good tillable farm land. I am also not a fan of the “sustainable bio fuels” as they pollute more than natural gas. I’m more inclined to continue the tax credits for individuals and business to add solar and geothermal to their existing structures.

Smythe: As I mentioned in a previous answer, I support climate-smart policies that encourage investment in renewable energies, battery technologies, clean microgrids, and more. New York state should be charging fossil fuel power plants the social cost of carbon that they are now releasing free of charge. These fees could help animate the transition away from fossil fuels to clean energy, create jobs, and fund environmental programs like the Restore Mother Nature Act.

Question 6: How do you plan to reach out to your constituency to ensure that you hear all the voices of the people you represent?

Barrett: I pride myself on being accessible to every part of my district. Traditionally, I’ve done regular “Diner Stops” in every town that I represent and invite the community to have a one-on-one conversation with me. I make a point to attend as many farmers’ markets, veterans’ ceremonies, block parties, and community events that I can. If there is an event or meeting that you would like me to join, please let me know, I will make every effort to be there. During COVID-19, many of our usual events look very different, but my team and I have still been delivering hand sanitizer and PPE to food pantries, veterans’ groups, and any community group who needs it. And of course, we are always accessible through phone and email in our offices in Hudson and Poughkeepsie. If there is anything we can assist with, or anything you would like me to know, please reach out.

Michael: I will always have an open door policy. I will also plan to meet with all of the Mayors, Supervisors and County Leaders on a regular basis; as well as schedule meetings with community groups and town halls to stay in contact with the needs of our district.

Smythe: I plan to hold town halls, public forums, and meet with constituents in their communities on a regular basis. I will also create advisory councils filled with local experts and stakeholders on different important subjects including the environment and our watersheds. And, I plan to have a strong team in my office who will be available to quickly respond to every constituent.

UNITED STATES CONGRESS, NEW YORK DISTRICT 19

The 19th Congressional District includes western Montgomery County, all of Schoharie County, all of Columbia, Delaware, Greene, Otsego, Sullivan and Ulster counties, and parts of Broome, Dutchess and Rensselaer counties. Red Hook, Rhinebeck, and Milan are in the 19th CD. This district has been represented by Antonio Delgado since 2018.

Antonio Delgado (D, Incumbent)

Detailed position statements are available at <https://delgadoforcongress.com>.

Victoria Alexander (L)

For more information, see <https://directdemocracyus.org/>.

Kyle Van De Water (R)

You can learn more about Van De Water's positions by visiting his website <https://www.kyleforny19.com>.

Steven Greenfield (Green)

For more information about Steven Greenfield, please see <https://stevegreenfieldforcongress.com/>.

Candidate Responses

Question 1: Do you support the US rejoining the Paris Climate Accord?

Alexander: Not really. The proposed plans don't do enough.

Delgado: For more information, please visit: <https://delgadoforcongress.com>.

Van De Water: For more information, please visit: <https://www.kyleforny19.com>.

Greenfield: Yes, but I consider that a symbolic gesture. We need to go much, much further and make climate change and overall environmental preservation, and world leadership on the environment, our top domestic and foreign policy priorities.

Question 2: Do you support a Green New Deal? If so, why, and if not, why not?

Alexander: No. I offer a Gold New Deal. See attached.

Greenfield: Yes, I do. But I want to be clear that what Democrats are calling "the" Green New Deal is a wholly inadequate, watered down appropriation of the term from my own Green Party, which has been using it since 2010 to define a much more aggressive and comprehensive program.

Candidate Responses

Greenfield (cont.): The Democrat version, associated with Markey in the Senate, and AOC in the House, doesn't even ban fracking, even as methane leakage is the fastest-growing contributor to greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, not to mention generating seismic activity in formerly geologically stable areas, and physical and chemical damage to water tables.

The biggest challenge to the environment is an economic system that places a much higher dollar value on extracting dangerous chemicals than leaving them in the ground, and as long as that is the case, we're only genuflecting at environmental decay, attracting votes rather than creating solutions. Anyone serious about the environment, and protecting it permanently with an environmentally conscious economy, needs to embrace the real Green New Deal, as I have since 2002, when, in my first Congressional campaign, I referred to it as "conversion to a post-fossil fuel economy. Full details, including revenue streams, can be found here. <https://howiehawkins.us/the-ecosocialist-green-new-deal-budget/>

Question 3: Recent rollbacks that threaten the Clean Water Act also threaten our health and safety. What would you do to restore and protect the Clean Water Act?

Alexander: When fracking was exempted from the Clean Water Act it became meaningless. We need to reduce the power of the oil and gas industry (and other industries) so that they can't keep getting exemptions. First step: end US subsidies of oil and gas industry; this will allow green energy to compete.

Greenfield: A comprehensive Green New Deal would restore, expand, and make permanent clean water protection. There is also much to be learned from the principles of The Red Deal. <https://therednation.org/four-principles-of-the-red-deal/>

Question 4: How will you work to restore the role of the EPA to more effectively protect our air and water from an increasing array of toxic contaminants, including the emerging contaminants like PFAS?

Alexander: The EPA is a captured agency. We need citizen-led organizations to protect us.

Greenfield: As a firefighter of 17 years service, I have been exposed to PFAS, which is found in fire suppression foam. The first thing we have to do is ban its use in training, replacing it with inert simulators, and mandate replacement of all PFAS-containing substances. We must prohibit the testing of chemicals by companies involved in their manufacture and distribution, and require independent federal testing before introduction to the marketplace. The EPA must be empowered to act on science without interference, and nobody associated with chemical production, distribution, or lobbying, or receiving pay in a research, academic, or media setting from such sources, may be employed by the EPA.

Question 5: Do you support NY State's ban on fracking? Should there be a federal ban on fracking as well?

Candidate Responses

Alexander: Yes. I want to protect everyone's fundamental human right to access to clean water.

Greenfield: I do, but unfortunately, it is only a ban on NYS production, not on transmission or large-scale combustion for power generation and other industrial uses, both of which are significantly expanding with Cuomo's full support. All that does is induce greater production, employment, and revenue generation in other states, while releasing their methane and byproducts of combustion into New York State, going forward at least 40 years, the average lifespan of those systems. We must ban all new construction of fracked gas-burning systems. I have been involved in civil disobedience and other resistance activities against Cricket Valley and Danskammer, and will continue to do so.

Question 6: How do you plan to reach out to your constituency to ensure that you hear all the voices of the people you represent?

Alexander: Unlike Democrats and Republicans, I am open to hearing from everyone and I believe that we all want the same things.

Greenfield: I am unique in this race in that I'm not part of a "bubble." I'm progressive and environmentalist, but I'm also a firefighter, and an Eagle Scout, and my information circles include a very wide range of demographics and ideologies within the 19th District. As an independent contractor playing music for a living, I have worked constantly for municipalities and private venues throughout the entirety of the district for 19 years. Before that, as a touring musician, I traveled extensively throughout the United States. While I live in New Paltz for nearly 20 years, until I was 39 I lived in dense urban environments, where I still work, and between that, which included several years in poverty, I'm imbued in the full range of living conditions within the district and America. I'm a delegate to the Ulster County Volunteer Firefighters Association/FASNY, as well as a member of the New Paltz Board of Education's Legislative Action Committee, which coordinates through the Ulster County School Boards Association/NYSSBA. I hold a degree in economics from Columbia. As a member of Congress, I would draw upon all of these experiences and associations to ensure full outreach and access to everyone in the district.

As a Green, corporate funding and partisan institutions would have no influence over me whatsoever.

I would also like to add something completely absent from mainstream political environmental discourse, which is that pandemics are environmental crises. They are organisms, and some of their origins are, like climate change, anthropogenic in nature. Their means of contagion, in particular, are the result of political decisions of the past and present, and can be mitigated by making future decisions in a context conscious of that. You will not ever see that discussed, let alone acted upon, if a Democrat or Republican gets elected to this seat.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to respond. You can find full details about my campaign at my website, <https://stevegreenfieldforcongress.com>.

*Protecting the Saw Kill watershed and its ecological, recreational,
and historic resources through hands-on science, education, and advocacy.*

In our October 8th SKWC Newsletter, we thanked the candidates who responded to our questions and noted that if we receive additional responses, we will send them out as soon as possible. This addendum to our Newsletter contains our recently received response from Kevin Cahill (D, Incumbent), running for NY State Assembly, District 103. We appreciate the time it takes to run for office, and appreciate these responses to our questions.

New York State Assembly, District 103

The New York State Assembly has a total of 150 seats. The 103rd District represents people from Red Hook, Rhinebeck, Kingston, New Paltz, and Woodstock.

Kevin Cahill (D, Incumbent)

For more information, please see <https://www.assembly.ny.gov/mem/Kevin-A-Cahill>.

Rex Bridges (R, C)

For more information, please see Rex Bridges for Assembly on Facebook.

Question 1: NY State currently protects wetlands that are larger than 12.4 acres. However, this represents only a fraction of the state's wetlands. Small wetlands are critical for both water quality protection and flood mitigation--currently most of them are not protected by either state or federal regulations. Do you support state legislation to protect wetlands smaller than 12.4 acres?

Cahill: Yes. I support stronger wetland protection measures, including expanding the unique circumstances under which smaller parcels can be regulated, increasing buffers and adjacent areas and filling in the gaps created by the pulling back of federal regulation.

Question 2: Do you support state measures to protect NY waters from harmful chemicals not currently regulated by the federal government (including emerging contaminants like PFAS) and limit or ban their use in NY?

Cahill: Yes. The days when we could rely upon the EPA or any federal agency to be the primary protector against harmful pollution and specific contaminants are over. As we struggle to clean the Hudson River of PCBs and other substances, the feds have been a weak partner. New York has the expertise, the scale and the will to do the job right.

Question 3: What is your position on construction of new fossil fuel infrastructure in NY State, e.g. natural gas plants and pipelines, and transportation that carries oil and gas through our communities and along our waterways? What measures should we take as a state to reduce our use of fossil fuels?

Cahill: I was a leader in our efforts to regulate (to the extent that states are permitted) against Bomb trains and turning the Hudson River into an oil barge parking lot. I was the leader of the Assembly Energy Committee and ushered through Green Jobs/Green NY and made the Regional Green House Gas Initiative (power plant cap and trade) statutory law in New York State. My focus remains demand reduction. Unless and until we reign in demand, through reasonable conservation measures, weatherization and modernization of systems and removing the economic incentives for fossil fuel use, we will be faced with a dilemma of needing additional energy supplies beyond what can be affordably or reasonably supplied through renewable and green sources. I am the author and prime sponsor of two key measures to recalibrate the economic scale. First, along with Senator Elizabeth Krueger, we have introduced legislation (A86775/S6881) that would review and sunset all state tax expenditures (tax credits, incentive programs, etc) that prop up fossil fuel usage. I am also the author A8372, which would create a carbon tax in New York (also S6037 Parker in the State Senate).

Question 4: What is your position on the Restore Mother Nature bond act?

Cahill: I supported the placement on the ballot of the Restore Mother Nature Bond Act even though I was of the view that it was not ambitious enough. When Governor Andrew Cuomo unilaterally decided to pull it from the ballot, I wrote to him to urge reconsideration of the decision and to let the public decide. He did not respond to my letter or restore the measure to the ballot this November.

Question 5: What steps would you take to help New York meet its stated goals of limiting statewide greenhouse gas emissions to 40% of 1990 levels by 2030 and 85% by 2050?

Cahill: The tax expenditure bill and the carbon tax measure mentioned above are the surest ways to achieve our goals. In addition, we should embark on a Manhattan Project level effort to bring about utility scale conservation measures, a rapid transition to non-fossil fuel based vehicles and create tariffs and structures that once and for all level the playing field for renewables in the production of energy and in manufacturing. Still, conservation, conservation, conservation is the best answer and an indispensable and major part of any solution.

Question 6: How do you plan to reach out to your constituency to ensure that you hear all the voices of the people you represent?

Cahill: I actively pursue opportunities to speak to groups in the communities I represent. I participate in a regular biweekly community call in radio broadcast. Though I limit my use of the mailing privileges of the office in which I serve, when I do a mailing, it is to convey important information or to solicit views from the constituency to which I am answerable. I also participate in public hearings to advocate on behalf of consumers. Our office operates five days a week from 9 - 5, Monday through Friday. We advertise and promote multiple means of communication including social media. The District Office has been a forum for numerous community meetings of groups, large and small.