



NEW YORK STATE ORNITHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION, INC.

for the birds and birders of New York State since 1948

Speaker Carl E. Heastie
NY State Assembly
Albany, NY

June 11, 2017

Dear Speaker Heastie:

I am writing on behalf of the New York State Ornithological Assoc., Inc. regarding the proposed establishment of anchorage grounds for commercial vessels in the Hudson River. Legislation is pending in the Assembly (A.6825A) that would increase the state's jurisdiction over the siting of dangerous oil barges on New York waterways, particularly in light of proposals to greatly increase anchorages for these vessels carrying crude oil and other petroleum products on the river. It is important that NY State have the ability to control its own destiny on this historic and environmentally critical waterway.

Our organization is the umbrella group for bird clubs and several Audubon chapters in the state, including a number in and near the Hudson Valley. We have 500 individual members and 42 member organizations across NY State.

The Hudson River is frequently visited by our members and member organizations to seek bird viewing. It is one of the premier areas for both birds and birders in the state, and beyond. The Hudson has had a long history of abuse from chemical and wastewater pollution, and despite extensive efforts to clean up the river, lingering pollution remains, threatening wildlife and human health.

Any proposal that may increase risk to the Hudson River should be given the greatest scrutiny and allowed to proceed only if there is clear evidence that the dangers that have plagued the river in the past will not return. It is apparent that many of the vessels that would use these anchorages will be carrying petroleum products, including crude oil. The history of oil production and transportation on water is littered with horror stories, from the Exxon Valdez to the Deepwater Horizon. Birds are one of the main casualties of these events, with hundreds of thousands of oiled birds dying. The indirect impacts from habitat destruction and food chain impacts are just as significant.

The anchorages and oil barges are not the only threat to the Hudson from the increased flow of petroleum through this corridor. Rail lines adjacent to the river are carrying more of these materials, also posing the risk of a spill.

With the currents and tides of the Hudson River, it is unlikely that a major spill could be contained. The marshes and wetlands that make up much of the riverside habitat is particularly vulnerable. The value and importance of these areas to waterfowl, wading birds, shorebirds, eagles and other species cannot be overstated. This is irreplaceable breeding, feeding and migratory habitat for these birds, many of which are already at risk.

Given present technology and both past and recent history, it is very unlikely that the increased traffic these anchorages would bring would not increase the dangers to the Hudson River, its wildlife—including birds, and the thousands of people who live along it.

We urge you to use your influence and votes to ensure passage of A.6825A this session.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Andrew Mason".

Andrew Mason
Conservation Chair