



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pete Harckham

## Harckham, Shimsky, Jones and Environmental Advocates Urge Action on Road Salt Bills

PETE HARCKHAM May 20, 2025

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State Senator Pete Harckham at the podium during the road salt press conference

*Albany, NY* – New York State Senator Pete Harckham and Assemblymembers MaryJane Shimsky and D. Billy Jones, along with several key environmental advocates, urged action today on legislation to protect New York City drinking water sources and the lakes and rivers in Adirondack Park from elevated salt levels caused from road salt use.

New York State has developed safe methods for reducing road salt use but lacks a coordinated program to implement them. Two bills offer much-needed support for the state in advancing road salt reduction measures. The first bill, [S.6976A / A.4481A](#), introduced by Sen. Harckham and Asm. Jones, would create the New York State Road Salt Reduction Council to oversee this urgent water quality and public health protection effort.

The second bill, [S.3442 / A.7057](#), introduced by Sen. Harckham and Asm. Shimsky, would establish the East of Hudson watershed road salt reduction task force, pilot plan and test program to conduct a comprehensive review of road salt contamination and road management best practices within the east of Hudson watershed. This task force would essentially complement a similar one already at work in the Adirondack region.

The call to action came at a special press conference here New York State Capitol, where the legislators were joined by Brendan Wiltse, Ph.D. of the Lake George Association, Shannon Roback, Ph.D. from Riverkeeper and Kevin Chlad and John Sheehan from the Adirondack Council, plus a number of legislative colleagues who are cosponsors on the bills.

To see a video of the press conference, click [here](#).

“Decades of road salt applications during the winter months have impacted our fragile drinking water supplies, as well as our natural resources around the state,” said Harckham. “This legislation collects some of the good work already being done to reduce road salt use, namely coordinating reduction efforts statewide, and quantifying the extent of the problem in the watershed where the New York City drinking water reservoirs are located. That’s why I’m asking my colleagues in the State Legislature to act now before it is too late.”

Harckham added, “With one of the water reservoirs in the district I represent just 30 years away from being too salty for consumption, I recognize how dire this problem is becoming.

While it is essential that our roadways are safe during the winter months, we need statewide answers and smart management for road salt use now.”

“There’s no more fundamental test of government than to ensure that our tap water is safe for everyone,” said Asm. Shimsky. “Yet, there are some people on low-sodium diets for whom New York’s drinking water is already unhealthy. Our crops also stand to suffer, and our infrastructure will erode, if we do not act. We still have time to turn around the rising salinity in our water. The bills that Assemblymember Jones and I are sponsoring with Senator Harckham will move that process forward by convening stakeholders and testing the most effective ways to reduce the amount of salt we put on our roads in the years to come.”

“It is imperative to reduce road salt run-off across the state to protect our waterways,” said Asm. Jones. “For years, I have heard heartbreaking stories about people who cannot use the water at their homes due to the high salt content from road salt run-off. The Adirondack Road Reduction Salt Task Force, created due to a bill I sponsored, discovered that road salt is polluting waterways across the Adirondacks and that we can reduce road salt and maintain safety. The purpose of my bill to create a New York Road Salt Reduction Council and Advisory Committee is to better coordinate with state agencies to find best practices for road salt use statewide to protect our constitutional right to clean water.”

Recent studies show an alarming rise in salt contamination in Hudson Valley drinking water reservoirs serving New York City and in surface and sub-surface waters of the Adirondack Park. Elevated salt levels harm human health, damage fish and wildlife habitat, and disintegrate roads, bridges and vehicles.

Sen. Harckham noted at today’s press conference that just two months ago, New York City Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Rohit Aggarwala released a report

showing that 33 years of data point to the Croton Water System, which provides drinking water to New York City, will cease to be a water supply in 75 years because of high salt levels. The salinity rates in the reservoir system, in fact, had tripled in the past three decades. This reservoir system has been providing water to New York City since 1842.

Meanwhile, the NYC DEP report notes that at this rate the Amawalk Reservoir in Somers, the smallest of the 12 reservoirs in the Croton system, will need to be offline within 30 years because of high salinity. Some residents who are on strict low-sodium diets are being told already not to drink the tap water in New York City right now.

**State Senator Nathalia Fernandez** said, “Protecting New York’s drinking water and natural ecosystems requires proactive, coordinated action. These bills establish the structure and expertise needed to address the growing threat of road salt contamination without compromising public safety. By bringing together scientists, agencies, and community leaders, we are laying the groundwork for long-term, sustainable solutions. This is a smart, forward-looking approach to safeguarding the health of our residents and the environment we all share.”

**State Senator Robert Jackson** said, ““Water is life—and in New York, it’s heritage, health, and home. From the Adirondacks to the East of Hudson, we cannot let the fight against ice become a war on our ecosystems and our drinking water. Road salt may clear our roads, but it must not cloud our future. That’s why I proudly support S6976-A and S3442—bills rooted in science, community wisdom, and bold government action. These efforts bring together councils, task forces, and the people most impacted to ensure that safe roads and clean water can coexist. Our watersheds are not dumping grounds—they are lifelines. Public safety and environmental justice can—and must—go hand in hand.”

**State Senator Julia Salazar** said, “New York’s drinkable water is something that is easy to take for granted, but in reality, it is a luxury many places in our country and around the world do not have. The pollution stemming from salting our roads cannot be ignored and should be managed *before* it causes our water to become toxic. I’m proud to support freshwater salinity management and look forward to advocating for it further.”

**State Senator Lea Webb** said, “As a co-sponsor of S6976A, I’m proud to support efforts that reduce excessive road salt use and protect our lakes, streams, and drinking water. This legislation reflects our growing understanding of how road salt impacts not just our environment, but also public health and infrastructure. By advancing thoughtful, science-based approaches and creating regional task forces like the East of Hudson initiative, we’re taking meaningful steps toward environmental justice and sustainable solutions for communities across New York State.”

**Assemblymember Dana Levenberg** said, “Icy roads are a hazard, but so is road salt in our drinking water. We must find a way to strike a balance between these two quality of life issues. These two bills will help us study this issue and develop responsible road salt practices that will help us protect our roads, our water infrastructure, and our water supply.”

**Assemblymember Amy Paulin** said, “I’m proud to be a co-sponsor of this important legislation and am grateful to Assembly Member Jones and State Senator Harckham for their leadership in addressing the urgent need to reduce road salt usage across New York State,” said Assemblywoman Amy Paulin. “I fully agree that we must act to protect our waterways and environment from the harmful effects of excessive salt. In my district, the Village of Scarsdale has successfully reduced road salt use by 30% through the adoption of a more sustainable beet juice and brine de-icing method. I’m hopeful that the Road Salt Reduction Council created by this bill will help identify and promote best practices like this across the state, enabling more communities to safeguard drinking water and preserve aquatic

ecosystems.”

**DEP Commissioner Rohit T. Aggarwala** said, “DEP’s recent study found a clear and troubling trend of increasing salinity in and around the Croton water supply region, a threat that looms across the entire country. As the nation’s largest municipal water supply system serving half of the state’s population with the gold standard in water quality, we must do everything possible to protect this most precious resource, along with our fellow municipalities from Montauk to Peekskill to Plattsburgh to Buffalo. We are grateful to Chair Harckham and Assembly Members Shimsky and Jones for their leadership on this issue, protecting all New Yorkers from this acute danger to our water supplies.”

**Dr. Shannon Roback, Ph.D., Science Director at Riverkeeper**, said, “We are seeing clear and alarming evidence that excessive road salt use is contaminating drinking water across New York at levels that make the water unsafe for people on low sodium diets. Protecting public health and our environment does not mean compromising road safety—we can and must pursue smart, science-based strategies that maintain safe winter travel while also reducing harmful salt pollution that may eventually make water undrinkable for many New Yorkers. The Road Salt Reduction Council Act is a critical step in that direction. We’re grateful to Senator Harckham and Assemblymembers Jones and Shimsky for their leadership in addressing this mounting threat to New Yorkers’ drinking water.”

**Sawyer Bailey, Executive Director of AdkAction**, said, “The Adirondack region has taken meaningful steps toward safer, smarter road salt use. Now it’s time for the state to do the same. This legislation creates the leadership and accountability needed to turn proven solutions into statewide practice. We appreciate Assemblymember Jones and Harckham’s leadership”

**Kelley Tucker, Executive Director of Ausable Freshwater Center**, said, "The science is clear. In the Adirondacks and statewide, reducing the use of road salt improves the quality of our essential freshwater systems."

Despite maintaining just 27% of Adirondack roads, New York State's Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) is responsible for 84% of the chloride variation in the region's lakes, according to the Adirondack Watershed Institute. Groundwater is also at risk: two-thirds of wells located downhill from state roads have been found to exceed EPA guidelines for sodium or chloride. The consequences affect both human health and the environment, especially in rural communities where most residents rely on private wells.

Local governments in the Adirondacks have already joined the Clean Water Safe Roads Partnership, which is committed to reducing road salt while preserving winter road safety. These efforts have not only protected natural resources but have also resulted in significant cost savings for small towns and villages.

**Brendan Wiltse, Executive Director of Lake George Association**, said, "Lake George is living proof that we can reduce road salt, protect our waters, and still keep roads safe for winter travel. It's time for New York State to turn proven regional success into statewide policy."

Harckham and Jones's proposed Road Salt Reduction Council would advance the work by establishing measurable salt use limits and developing science-based standards to be adopted by the Departments of Environmental Conservation and Health. A Citizen Advisory Committee would ensure that the local voices most affected by road salt pollution are heard in the process.

**Raul J. Aguirre, Executive Director of the Adirondack Council**, said, "In the Adirondacks, relying on outdated methods to maintain safe winter roads poses real and significant damage to the environment. Recent water studies make it clear: we need a new approach that meaningfully

balances winter road safety with clean water protection. The health of our communities—both natural and human—depends on it. It's time to establish a New York State Road Salt Reduction Council and Citizen Advisory Committee to safely reduce road salt use in the Adirondacks and across New York State.”

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#### RELATED LEGISLATION

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## 2025-S3442

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- Introduced
- - In Committee Assembly
  - In Committee Senate
- - On Floor Calendar Assembly
  - On Floor Calendar Senate
- - Passed Assembly
  - Passed Senate
- Delivered to Governor
- Signed By Governor
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Establishes the East of Hudson watershed road salt reduction task force, pilot plan and test program



January 27, 2025

In Senate Committee **Transportation**

Sponsored by **Pete Harckham**

Do you support this bill?