



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Adriano Espaillat

Sen. Espaillat, Environmental Activists Demonstrate Against Dumping of Untreated Sewage into Hudson River and Call for Better Notification System to Protect the Public

ADRIANO ESPAILLAT July 27, 2011

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State Senator Adriano Espaillat (D – Manhattan/Bronx) called for an end to the disturbing practice of dumping untreated sewage waste, even in extenuating circumstances. Sen. Espaillat, joined by environmental activists following a major accident at the North River Wastewater Treatment Plant and the ensuing dumping of millions of gallons of untreated

sewage into the Hudson River, also called for better notification systems to alert the public in emergency cases where the quality of New York waterways has been compromised.

“There is nothing more important than the health of New Yorkers and we simply cannot rest until we stop the dumping of millions of gallons of raw sewage into our waters,” said Senator Adriano Espaillat. “The terrible accident at the North River Wastewater Treatment Plant and the millions of gallons of raw sewage that subsequently wound up in the Hudson is the most recent reminder that keeping our land, water, and air pollution free takes serious work and dedication.”

Even before the spill, hundreds of millions of gallons of untreated sewage are released into waterways throughout the year, thanks to sewage plants’ limited capacity during heavy rains. “Any amount of hazardous waste going into our waters is unacceptable and we must work together to come up with real alternatives that process the sewage without jeopardizing our environment or the public health,” said Sen. Espaillat, who serves on the Senate Environmental Conservation Committee.

“In the absolute worst-case scenarios when the quality of our water ways is compromised, we must implement an effective system to issue appropriate warnings and ensure that residents are aware of the presence of hazardous elements in the water,” said Sen. Espaillat, pointing to calls from alarmed constituents who visited portions of the Hudson where raw sewage had been released, without ever knowing of the sewage’s presence.

Riverkeeper, a watchdog organization dedicated to preserving the Hudson River echoed Sen. Espaillat’s statements and called for better notification procedures to be put in place.

“Riverkeeper considers the entire 155 miles of the Hudson River Estuary a “beach” during the boating and swimming season – New York City should do the same for its 600 miles of waterfront,” said Paul Gallay, President and Hudson Riverkeeper. “It is critical that

when untreated sewage is dumped into our waterways, NYC officials immediately notify the public, and provide them with timely, accurate information about the health risk so that New Yorkers who want to enjoy the city's waters from any point of access can do so with the best information available.”

L. Ann Rucker, a Northern Manhattan environmental advocate and president of Friends of the Riverbank State Park, said: “This is a devastating accident and we are all very concerned. The DEP and the City need to take up long term solutions that protect the health of our children, families, and seniors, as well as our environment. After the City is finished looking into what caused the accident, we must take steps to make sure something like this never happens again.”

New York City Councilman Ydanis Rodriguez said: “It's extremely important that Senator Espaillat organized this rally today, because the city hasn't been dealing with the problem of untreated sewage going into our waterways,” said Council Member Ydanis Rodriguez. “Most of us in this city live on islands; in fact, my district is surrounded by 3 separate rivers, so you can understand why the dumping of millions of gallons of raw sewage into our waterways is such a serious problem. I look forward to the results of the Senator's investigations into not only this incident, but the hundreds of millions of gallons of untreated sewage that are regularly flowing into our waterways every year.”

Brad Taylor, a member of Community Board 9’s Parks Committee said: “The sewage release into the Hudson is very disturbing. This is a problem that will negative affect local residents and businesses alike.”