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Gregory P. Cannillo
Union College - Schenectady, NY

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Old Father Hudson:
The Three Stages of Environmental Activism in the Hudson River
Valley

By

Gregory Cannillo

UNION COLLEGE
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Abstract: Consequences of development have threatened the health of the Hudson River for decades. These have included the prospect of destroying scenic value of the Hudson River Valley with the a hydroelectric power plant on Storm King Mountain, as well as the pollution of the river itself by a variety of industrial sources. Since the 1960s, a long lineage of environmental activism in the Hudson River Valley has emerged to address those issues. The example of the Hudson River supplies an excellent case study of how environmental issues began to be addressed in the later half of the 20th century. I will demonstrate how environmental activism regarding the Hudson River had developed since the 1960s. Research focused primarily on several key environmental organizations —Scenic Hudson Inc., Riverkeeper, and the Hudson River Sloop Clearwater—to reveal environmental awareness of a particular time period. Data for the project was gathered from primary sources such as contemporary newspaper articles, archival sources at the Hudson River Sloop Clearwater Collection, and the Scenic Hudson Collection. As a result, it was found that environmental activism on the Hudson River very much so reflected the evolution of the greater environmental movement’s transition from scenic to ecological concerns of the Hudson River. The Storm King case marked the beginning of the transition from preservationist to ecological concerns, the *Clearwater* focused on the education of the ecology of the Hudson, and the Riverkeeper pursued polluters on the basis of this altered ethic. All in all resulting in making the Hudson River one of the most cared about and distinct bodies of water in the nation.

On February 20th, 2011 the *Observer-Dispatch* of Utica, New York published a story suggesting that Atlantic tomcod, a bottom-feeding fish found in the Hudson River, has been able to develop resistance to polychlorinated biphenyl through gene variation. The study, done by Isaac Wirgin of New York University School of Medicine, was published in the journal *Science* a week before. Since 1947, an estimated 1.3 million pounds of polychlorinated biphenyl, more commonly know as PCBs, had been dumped into the Hudson River by General Electric before being banned in 1975. PCBs have been well established as a carcinogen even when they were still in production. With the discovery of rampant PCB infestation in fish, the state banned commercial fishing in the Hudson River in the late 1970s. The PCBs have settled at the bottom of the Hudson, and have remained there for decades because General Electric has long been avoiding cleanup, suggesting that stirring the PCBs would be more detrimental then beneficial to the ecosystem. Many critics suggest that the present cost of cleanup, including the re-exposure of buried PCBs, does not compare to the restored health of the Hudson in the

long-run. Wirgin's findings present a very new twist to this saga. The genetic variation in tomcod suggests that under extreme environmental stress resistance may be able to be developed by fish. In the case that the Hudson is not totally removed of PCBs, the health of the fish may not be damaged due to gene variation, although this would mean that the Hudson would produce fish that were highly toxic for human consumption. While the effects of these findings are preliminary, this is just another chapter in the history of arguably the most distinctive body of water in the United States.¹

Robert Boyle, long time President of the Hudson River Fishermen's Association wrote, "To those who know it, the Hudson River is the most beautiful, messed up, productive, ignored, and surprising piece of water on the face of the earth," in his 1979 book *The Hudson River: A Natural and Unnatural History*.² This paper aims to study the history of environmental activism on the Hudson in order to uncover the stream of its development over the decades. In studying the three major environmental organizations that represented the opposition to the deterioration of the Hudson River—Scenic Hudson, Hudson River Sloop Clearwater, and, Riverkeeper—the evolution of the environmental movement throughout latter half of the 20th century will be uncovered. The corresponding findings are quite consistent with sentiments such as Boyle's. He is not out of place in stating that the Hudson River is one of the most distinctive rivers in the United States and possibly the world.

¹ Randolph E. Schmid, "Hudson River Fish Resist PCBs Through Gene Variant," *Observer-Dispatch*, Utica, N.Y. February 20, 2011.

² Robert H. Boyle, *The Hudson River: A Natural and Unnatural History*. New York: W W Norton & Co. Inc. (1979): 15.

Mover and Shakers: A Secondary Literature Review of Three Hudson River
Environmental Organizations

Samuel Hays, in his book, *Beauty, Health, and Permanence: Environmental Politics in the United States, 1955-1985*, contended that environmental concerns arose in reaction to the social changes that occurred in the U.S. following World War II. Post-World War II the public's interest in outdoor recreation in the 1950s continued to grow to encompass protecting the natural resources that the families had become reacquainted with. This then led to a concern regarding water and air quality, and eventually an aversion for toxic chemical pollutants. Whereas in the past a small number of environmental advocates were mainly concerned with the conservation of natural resources for the need to establish efficient development, following World War II many people gradually turned to supporting the preservation of natural resources, because many now felt that the preservation of nature was an essential part of raising quality of life. Rivers, forests, and other ecosystems began to be viewed as precious in an undisturbed state. Environmental quality of life had become an "integral part of the drives inherent in persistent human aspiration and achievement."³

However, this newfound outlook on natural resources did not occur seamlessly. While younger, more educated people began to adopt a preservationist view regarding the environment, many older conservationists felt that the goal of nature was to be used to ensure future sustainable and adequate development. For example, since water conservation in the western part of the country was an issue of enormous economic importance, by the end of World War II "multipurpose river development" became

³ Samuel Hays, *Beauty, Health, and Permanence: Environmental Politics in the United States, 1955-1985*, New York: Cambridge University Press, (1987): 2-3, 5.

rampant. Hydroelectric power plants could be built into irrigation dams in order to be utilized both as means to meet the water needs of the arid western climates, in addition to generating electric power. However, by the 1960s, these projects caused a clash between old-school conservational thought and the “newer environmental interest that began to emphasize the importance of free-flowing streams unmodified by large engineering structures.”⁴

As this thesis will demonstrate, the transition that Hays describes occurred within the Hudson River Valley in the struggle between conservationist values and a newer value system, one that was less economically focused and rooted in a more preservationist’s outlook. The transition of the public’s perception of natural resources being dominated by a conservationist viewpoint pre-World War II, to that of the environmental movement in the 1970s is rarely given emphasis.⁵ This transition was essential for the future of the Hudson River Valley, because the two conflicting strategies would have produced enormously varied results. These environmental conflicts that occurred in the 1960s constructed the platform for future environmentalism to develop, and in no place is this more clearly demonstrated than the Hudson River.

In 1962, Con Edison proposed the construction of a massive hydroelectric plant on Storm King Mountain. In reaction to this news, almost immediately, Scenic Hudson Preservation Conference formed in order to resist the proposed construction on a mountain that many considered to be one of the most spectacular and awe-inspiring sites in the United States. For seventeen years a legal battle ensued, resulting in the preservation of construction of the hydroplant on Storm King Mountain. Both the story

⁴ Hays, 14-15.

⁵ Hays, 53.

and the effect of Storm King are quite consistent throughout most publications. Frances F. Dunwell's *The Hudson: America's River* likely tells the most concise yet complete story of the Storm King case. In this history, Storm King is given the most attention of any other event that occurred in the Hudson Valley in the latter half of the 20th century. Dunwell notes that many claim that the Storm King case "launched modern environmental activism," making the Hudson the "poster child for river cleanup." He contended, that this case was vital for future debates regarding conservation. The outcome of this case established that citizen groups had the right to sue either government agencies or private companies in order to protect natural resources. Here, scenic value was established to be equally as important as energy development. The fact that resource protection concerns could now be considered legitimate facilitated the creation of a multitude of environmental groups. The environmental group that did emerge from this case, primarily Scenic Hudson and the Hudson River Fishermen's Association, became models for advocacy groups nationwide.

Dunwell also suggested that the Storm King case also transferred environmental concerns from wealthy landowners to now include grassroots mobilization. As a result, environmental protection became a major issue for the future election of political leadership. Additionally, the concerns of the Storm King issue had expanded over its course. While Storm King's initial opposition was a purely rooted in the protection of Storm King's scenic value, by its completion the concerns had began to encompass a more diversified list of problems. By the mid-1960s the issue of destroying fish life was brought about by the Hudson River Fishermen's Association, and towards the end of the decade water supply and energy production, among other concerns became debated

issues. Although this shift was incredibly important, Dunwell fails to note this as anything extraordinary. Finally, Dunwell touches upon the coverage of the Storm King Case:

In the press it was alternately played up as a David-and-Goliath struggle of a small band conservationists against a mighty utility and a soulless bureaucracy, as a thinly disguised ruse of rich men and women to protect the view from their backyards, as the struggle of towns and citizens to expand their tax base against outsiders seeking to preserve valueless scenery, and as an excuse to fight “the company you love to hate.”

Dunwell also felt that Storm King encompassed America’s post-World War II desire to halt furious development in exchange for salvaging the nation’s heritage. “Ultimately, it was the story of people rallying to maintain our nation’s cultural and spiritual connection with nature.”⁶ Americans felt that if the Storm King plant was constructed the landscape of the Hudson River Valley would be marred by industry.

This history, although paying a good amount of attention to the Storm King case, does not pay much attention to the Scenic Hudson coalition specifically. Dunwell does note that although Scenic Hudson had originally formed in direct opposition to the proposed Storm King plant, and that the Scenic Hudson Preservation Conference shifted its mission following the completion of the Storm King case. The coalition was renamed Scenic Hudson and made an official organization, instead of simply a conference, which began to expand its focus onto land preservation, waterfront development, and the eventual cleanup of PCBs. He also noted that Scenic Hudson had since Storm King successfully challenged numerous projects to preserve sections of the Hudson Valley.⁷ Another Hudson River history, Tom Lewis’ *The Hudson: A History*, pays a comparable amount of attention to the Storm King case, but gives less narrative to the effects that

⁶ Frances F. Dunwell, *The Hudson: America’s River*, New York: Columbia University Press, (2008): 304.

⁷ *Ibid.* 280, 289-290, 292.

Storm King had a the future of environmentalism. Lewis emphasized Scenic Hudson Preservation Conference as a coalition of anyone who opposed the Storm King plant, as opposed to an organization. Meanwhile, he also noted that Con Ed and other supporters of the plant negated the coalition as simply “misinformed bird watchers, nature fakers, land grabbers, and militant adversaries of progress.”⁸ This perception of Scenic Hudson is noteworthy in that those in support of the project originally undermined the concerns of Scenic Hudson as illegitimate.

Allan R. Tallbot’s *Power Along the Hudson: The Storm King Case and the Birth of Environmentalism* presented much the same sentiment as Dunwell, although he goes into much more detail about the hydroelectric plant, in addition to other projects that were proposed on the mountain. Tallbot notes that by the land started of the 1800s, Storm King was worthless property due to its terrain and ecological characteristics. This was one reason why Storm King Mountain remained quite underdeveloped. However, by the 1960s technology now made development a feasible option. Once defacement of the mountain was a real possibility many people from the New York metropolitan area became concerned with its preservation. Tallbot wrote that Americans often failed to understand their valuation of natural beauty until the threat of their destruction was impending. Therefore, Scenic Hudson formed in opposition to the construction, and many followed in protest. Now that the threat of development was pending the growing support in opposition to the Storm King plant was followed by constant research to be used as arguments in opposition to Con Ed’s plan, resulting in the Hudson River becoming the “most studied and protected natural resource in the United States” by the end of 1968.

⁸ Tom Lewis *The Hudson: A History*, Devon, Pennsylvania: Duke & Company, (2005): 265.

Essentially, this scenic concern eventually gave way to uncovering the ecological value of the river.

Like Dunwell, Tallbot emphasized the effects that Storm King had on environmental activism on a national scale. Here it was suggested that Storm King case was a phenomenal example of how the American political process can adapt to address the complex environmental developments. Additionally, the conservation movement shifted from away from wealthy people looking to protect resources towards a much more active and middle class concern, making the Hudson River a protected public interest. At the end of the saga, there was “laboratory boats, studies, and planning agencies for the Hudson where there was once only neglect.”⁹ This history recollected is comparable to that recalled by John Cronin, who eventually became a cornerstone of the Hudson River Fishermen’s Association/ Riverkeeper. Cronin felt that by 1966 Storm King had become a controversy on the national level. He contended that Storm King, along with Niagara Falls, had come to be considered “the most spectacular natural site east of the Mississippi.” This amazing site had mobilized 22,000 people from 48 states to send monetary contributions to Scenic Hudson. The battle at Storm King had helped “make the Hudson home to one of the most vigilant, sophisticated, and aggressive environmental communities in the world.”¹⁰ Likewise, Robin Winks in his biography about Laurance Rockefeller, stated that the Storm King case was the most dramatic clash between industry and conservation of the decade, allowing historians to mark the case as

⁹ Allan R. Tallbot, *Power Along the Hudson: The Storm King Case and the Birth of Environmentalism*, New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc. (1972): 10, 107, 160, 197-198.

¹⁰ John Cronin and Robert F. Kennedy Jr. *The Riverkeepers: Two Activists Fight To Reclaim Our Environment As a Basic Human Right*, New York: Touchstone, (1999): 33.

the definitive shift from conservation to environmentalism as a public concern, while also marring the credibility of the utilities industry.¹¹

Whereas conservationists argued about aesthetics, new environmentalist realized the interconnectedness of ecosystems, and began to understand these relationships based in hard science.¹² This transition from a scenic concern to one that embraced scientific research and consequent education allowed “ecology” to become a major interest within environmental activism between 1965 and 1972.¹³ Consequently, following this increasing knowledge about the river, folk-singer Pete Seeger initiated the Hudson River Sloop Restoration, Inc., to inform, educate, and get people involved to halt the pollution of the Hudson in 1965.¹⁴ The sloop was eventually constructed in 1969, and named the *Clearwater*, and sails to this day most prominently as a floating classroom. It teaches children and adults about the ecology of the Hudson River in order to get people to fall in love with the river again. With the advent of the Clean Water Act in 1972, the organization filed the first successful Clean Water Act suit against a polluter against Tuck Tape of Beacon N.Y., for dumping titanium dioxide, adhesives, solvents, latex, and sewage into the Fishkill Creek near where it drains into the Hudson. Additionally, Clearwater then established the People’s Pipewatch in order to make citizens more comfortable about reporting pollution they saw. In 1975 it was discovered that General Electric had been polluting the Hudson with polychlorinated biphenyl. Both the Department of Environmental Conservation and GE were held accountable for “corporate

¹¹ Winks, Robin W., *Laurance S. Rockefeller: Catalyst for Conservation*, Island Press: Washington D.C. (1997), 167.

¹² *Ibid*, 173.

¹³ Hays , 55.

¹⁴ K. Harrington-Hughes and D.V.F., “Clearwater Sails for Cleaner Hudson,” *Water Pollution Control Federation*, Vol. 51, No. 2 (1979): 219.

abuse and regulatory failure,” resulting in an out of court settlement.¹⁵ During the state enforcement case Clearwater, as well as the Hudson River Fishermen’s Association, served as an intervener.¹⁶ Since then, Clearwater has been a proponent of the removal of PCBs since its detection, yet cleanup has proven elusive.

In Seeger biographies, such as in *How Can I Keep From Singing?* David King Dunaway, and “My Dirty Stream” by David Ingram recognize the formation of Clearwater recognized as one of Seeger’s crowning achievements.¹⁷ They portray Clearwater as being a keystone for getting the final agreement between the state and GE reached. The specific focus on Seeger in these works likely overemphasizes his significance to the event; the hard science that in reality provided the catalyst to accomplish the goals of the Clearwater was just mentioned as an afterthought. In the article “My Dirty Stream,” David Ingram goes to great lengths to demonstrate that there was in fact a strong relationship between Seeger’s music and his environmental activism. In 1966 Malvina Reynolds and Pete Seeger released an album called *God Bless the Grass*, which was dedicated solely to environmental issues of the time. Most of the themes dealt with were pollution, over-development, and the inefficient utilization of resources, and how they were a threat to the standard of living to many people. This record also included Seeger’s “My Dirty Stream (The Hudson River Song).” Ingram not only praised the album for its political intelligence for using music to address some of the most pressing issues of the period, but also illustrated that the album was a natural progression for both Seeger and Reynolds. Ingram believed that environmental advocacy was simply an extension of Seeger’s prior involvement with the Civil Rights movement,

¹⁵ Cronin and Kennedy, 60-61.

¹⁶ John Cronin, interview by Gregory Cannillo, Phone, February 21, 2011.

¹⁷ Ingram, 26. Dunaway, 34.

and the Popular Front during World War II. Ingram also wrote that, “Seeger saw the Vietnam war as the murderous product of the same military industrial complex that was responsible for polluting the Hudson River near his home.”

To Seeger the global issues affecting the world were in the same vein as those affecting him and other Hudson River Valley residents at home. Seeger felt that in order for global issues to be solved local dilemmas should be addressed first, and Seeger felt that the condition of the Hudson River was of priority. Ingram therefore believed that the utilization of folk music was the natural means that Seeger would draw attention to these pressing issues, much like he did his entire career for other movements. Hence, the *Clearwater* represented an exercise of traditional left-wing politics, while also holding to a tradition conservative lifestyle in the face of more diversified cultural behaviors.¹⁸

In histories focusing solely on the Hudson River, the Hudson River cleanup of the 1960s and 1970s often pales in comparison to the rest of the rich history of the river. Furthermore, the *Clearwater* often serves as a footnote to the Storm King Case. In *The Hudson: A History* by Tom Lewis, the *Clearwater* sloop, was acknowledged simply as a teaching tool. Its magnificence drew attention to what the river once was prior to the high levels of pollution, yet its effect on legislation was not mentioned. In *The Hudson: America's River* by Frances F. Dunwell, Dunwell gave a brief but rather complete history of the *Clearwater* sloop. Once again the *Clearwater* was mentioned solely as an environmental icon that brought attention to the state of the environment, but did not mention any accomplishments beyond bringing the pollution to the attention of local residents. The *Clearwater* was portrayed as a step to bring more attention to the health of

¹⁸ David Ingram, “‘My Dirty Stream’: Pete Seeger, American Folk Music, and Environmental Protest,” *Popular Music and Society*: 31, 1, (2008): 21-23, 26, 29, 33, 35.

the Hudson, but not vital to the improvement of the water. Meanwhile, the influence of the Hudson River cleanup was not even mentioned in books focusing on the collective history of the environmental movement. In both *First Along the River* by Benjamin Kline, and in *A Fierce Green Fire* by Phillip Shabecoff any mention of the *Clearwater* or Storm King is completely absent. To these histories, the Hudson River cleanup was unremarkable; demonstrations of environmental catastrophes and remediation, such as the events that took place in Love Canal, N.Y., are used as preferable examples of the failure of prior environmental legislation and eventual remediation successes. Why the Hudson River cleanup was rarely mentioned as a monumental example of environmental activism may be due to the fact that it cannot yet be considered a success because the cleanup struggle is still occurring. Alternatively, the Hudson's cleanup may be simply viewed as a myriad of other river cleanups that occurred in the era. On the other hand many facets of an environmental success story are present, such as grass-root mobilization and the utilization of recently enacted legislation.

Likewise, the *Clearwater* provided an example in a trend of both left and environmental protest becoming more locally orientated, in hope of further personal engagement in close-to-home issues. Samuel Hays, in his book *Beauty, Health, and Permanence*, identified two factors that are useful in understanding the Hudson River Activism. First, he explained that grassroots activism was especially effective within the environmental movement because people were often witnessing the destruction of landscapes in their own towns, and therefore felt more obligated to take action to prevent further deterioration. While many other movements speak of issues in the abstract, the environmental movement had the great benefit of many pressing issues being very

tangible.¹⁹ The threat of environmental degradation in a community was an equal threat to both the highly concerned and the apathetic to the matter. In the case of the Hudson River, this landmark provided a characteristic to the area that produced a sense of belonging, and subsequently a responsibility to this amenity. The pollution provided a concrete example that rivers should no longer be perceived as a dump, because it was only a matter of time before this perception harmed all those living nearby. Secondly, people began to once again connect with a regional identity. For most of the first half of the 20th century had been forsaken as regional cornerstone, meanwhile Hudson River School artists had celebrated it just decades before. Hayes also emphasized the popularization of naturalist photography gave a visual to the beautiful landmarks that may be in danger of destruction to those who didn't live nearby, urging involvement from far-flung, often metropolitan, areas. Hays believed that by the 1960s and 1970s these "lesser natural formations acquired environmental significance at the regional level," therefore giving environmental issues of essentially local concern a larger stage to be viewed upon. The conglomerate of a multitude of grassroots movements enabled local environmental issues to be brought to the forefront of dilemmas to be addressed by all American, rather than just those limited to a particular area.²⁰

Unlike the Storm King case involving Scenic Hudson, and the *Clearwater's* advocacy program, both the Hudson River Fishermen's Association and Riverkeeper have failed to receive significant attention from historians. In Dunwell's *The Hudson*, he noted that following the Storm King case, in which the Fishermen's Association contributed research about the Hudson's fisheries, and since then the Association had

¹⁹ Hays, 36-39.

²⁰ Ibid, 36-39.

forged its own path as a “pollution fighter.” Following the passage of the Clean Water Act in 1972, Clearwater began to reduce the amount of funds spent on patrolling polluters because it was felt that either the Department of Environmental Conservation or the newly created federal Environmental Protection Agency would take the necessary means to punish and polluters along the Hudson River. Not everybody shared their optimism. Robert Boyle had created the Hudson River Fishermen’s Association in 1966 to combat the Storm King project, because the proposed hydroplant would have been detrimental to the fishing industry of the Hudson. In the late 1960s, Boyle had uncovered laws from 1888 and 1899, which enabled citizens to report polluters and entitled them to receive half of the charged bounty. This led to the creation of the staff position of “Riverkeeper” in 1972.²¹ In 1972 Boyle created the position of Riverkeeper in order to patrol and bring about suits against polluters on the Hudson. Tom Whyatt first took this position for two years, but eventually left due to insufficient funding. Boyle then resurrected the Riverkeeper position in 1983, inviting John Cronin, an ex-Clearwater staff member, to take up the position. Dunwell mentioned that Riverkeeper had proven quite successful during the 1980s and the early 1990s, but does not go into detail.

Following this brief history given in Dunwell’s book, he does not revisit the issue of Riverkeeper past the days following its initial inception. To the contrary, in Lewis’ *The Hudson*, John Cronin is given all the credit as Riverkeeper. Lewis states that Cronin was a commercial fisherman who “took it upon himself to become the Hudson Riverkeeper,” and was financed by concerned citizens. Cronin traveled the waters looking to collect all evidence of polluters in order to initiate lawsuits against businesses that were still using

²¹ Dunwell, 299, 300.

the Hudson as a sewer.²² Even the semi-autobiographical *The Riverkeepers*, written by John Cronin and Robert F. Kennedy, failed to provide a clear narrative of the importance of Riverkeeper, besides its prevention of future polluting. Cronin explained that Riverkeeper was created by the “blue-collar” Fishermen’s Association in order to track down polluters and bring them to justice. Both the HRFA and Riverkeeper felt that the Hudson River, and other bodies of water, was public property that needed to be protected by law and science.²³

It appears that the Storm King case and the *Clearwater* set precedent for what was to become of environmental activism on the Hudson River. Riverkeeper, however, was simply a fruition of the work done decades before. Whereas the successes of Scenic Hudson and Clearwater caused a cultural shift in how the Hudson River became to be viewed and understood, Riverkeeper’s accomplishments were discrete and tangible.

An extensive investigation of these three organizations was conducted using environmental and Hudson River histories, over thirty years worth of newspaper articles, archival sources of the Hudson River Sloop Clearwater Collection and the Scenic Hudson Collection stored at Marist College, as well as an oral history interview with John Cronin. Consequently, it was realized that the environmental history in the Hudson River Valley correlates almost perfectly with the progression of environmentalism on a national level. Three distinct phases of preservation, education about ecology, and subsequent prosecution against those jeopardizing the health of the river are easily distinguishable when studying the Hudson River.

²² Lewis, 273.

²³ Cronin and Kennedy, 19.

David versus Goliath: Scenic Hudson and the Storm King Case and the Beginning of Environmental Activism in the Hudson Valley

When Consolidated Edison announced that they would construct a massive hydroelectric power plant on Storm King Mountain in 1962 they expected little resistance. While most large power projects had traditionally been approved, Con Ed found themselves facing a legal battle with newly formed environmentalist groups, such as the Scenic Hudson Preservation Conference, that lasted 17 years and resulted in the preservation of Storm King Mountain. As reflected in the journalism of the time period, the proposed Storm King plant was a highly debated topic that stayed in the public eye for the duration of its legal odyssey. The resistance of environmentalists and Hudson River Valley residents to Storm King gave birth to environmental activism on the Hudson River, and produced, what many argue, what was one of the definitive national environmental activism cornerstones. Here, it was demonstrated that common citizens, through mobilization, had the ability to challenge on legal grounds some of America's largest corporations, and ultimately disrupt their plans of action.²⁴

Prior to this period, development for economic purposes virtually always took priority in comparison to other concerns, especially if the opposition was environmentally focused. However, following World War II objections of large-scale construction projects began to arise. In the 1950s a dam at Echo Park near the Utah-Colorado border was proposed; this dam would flood sections of the Dinosaur National Monument. In opposition to this plan the Sierra Club and the Wilderness Society led a coalition of other conservation groups challenging the construction, which successfully presented the

²⁴ Dunwell, 289.

project.²⁵ This example of conservationists halting construction likely gave impetus to the battle of Storm King. This rich history of struggle between development and preservation has allowed the Storm King case to become viewed as a major turning point in the saga between economical and environmental concerns in the historic Hudson River Valley.

Virtually right after the announcement of the Storm King plans by Consolidated Electric resistance emerged. Not long after, this resistance was brought to a wider public's eye in the press. In "Power Plan Stirs Battle on Hudson", published on May 22, 1963 John C. Delvin wrote:

Nature lovers, including members of conservation groups, garden clubs and hikers' organizations, are rallying to block installation of "very unsightly" hydroelectric power plants in this heartland of the storied Hudson Highlands, 50 miles north of New York.²⁶

This description illustrated that at this moment the opponents to Storm King seemed diverse and not particularly organized. The diversity of backgrounds among advocates appeared to be quite reflective of the lack of continuity of the general environmental movement at this point in time. Preservationists emphasized that wilderness should be protected from any urban or industrial influences, yet emphasize a multitude of reasons for this; nationalism, commercialism, spiritualism, and elite aestheticism were all suggested as reasons for preservation, resulting in a incoherent vision of what preservation should look like.²⁷ Meanwhile, it was not likely that many, other than the "nature lovers," were particularly aware of the "storied Hudson Highlands," specifically

²⁵ Hays, 139.

²⁶ "Fight is Widened on Hudson Plants," *New York Times*, November 17, 1963

²⁷ Gottlieb, Robert, *Forcing the Spring: The Transformation of the American Environmental Movement*, Washington D.C.: Island Press (2005), 60.

Storm King Mountain. The article quoted an excerpt of Leo Rothschild's letter to Governor Rockefeller on behalf of the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference:

The New York-New Jersey Trail Conference deplores the desecration of the northern gate of the Hudson Highland by the proposed power plants of Consolidated Edison at Storm King Mountain...Knowing your interest in the scenic and historic landmarks of our state, we hope you will do everything in your power to preserve the Highlands.²⁸

This brief article speaks volumes about what would occur with the Storm King case. First, people obviously cared very much the Hudson scenery, and mobilized very quickly to find means to preserve it. This deep concern for the scenic value of the Hudson River can be traced back to the Hudson River School artists, beginning in the mid-1800s. Artist such as Thomas Cole began to illustrate the Hudson River Valley as pristine, usually making mankind totally absent from the scene. These painters looked to encapsulate the Hudson's magnificence void of human impact.²⁹ These romanticized paintings often attracted the attention of metropolitan folk. Almost a century later the people who seemed to care about Storm King Mountain seemed to have similar characteristics.

In the article, Rothschild's return address of his letter to Rockefeller is given; reading in between the lines, the fact that Rothschild lives in New York City further demonstrates that the Hudson Highlands may have simply be a refuge from the busy city and a source of recreation. It seemed that at this point, there was no evidence suggesting that the construction of the Storm King plant would incur harm to those who strongly opposed construction beside the degradation of site they found aesthetically appealing. Consequently, at this moment it appeared that the "nature lovers" only looked to preserve

²⁸ Devlin, John C., "Power Plan Stirs Battle on Hudson," *New York Times*, May 22, 1963.

²⁹ Boyle, 60.

amenities that were valued by themselves. Lower classes usually devalued preservation because it inhibits their economic growth. Meanwhile the wealthy class would likely value preservation highly, because economic development is no longer a necessity to them.

Regardless of incentives of the Storm King plant opposition, the incredibly fast mobilization indicated that the mountain meant something special to many people, and its grandness would become something worth fighting 17 years for. Towards the end of 1963, conservationists had assembled to create the Scenic Hudson Preservation Conference. In “Fight is widened on Hudson Plants,” the Scenic Hudson Preservation Conference was stepping up its campaign for increased federal and state intervention to prevent Storm King. It also stated that Scenic Hudson was “dedicated to retaining the natural scenic beauties of the Hudson River Valley.”³⁰ This sentiment of protecting the natural aesthetic values reflected the concerns of the Wilderness movement just years prior to this incident. Wilderness advocacy has been a long tradition in the United States, concerned with the preservation of wilderness separate from human inhabitants. Following World War II the emphasis on wilderness was revisited in order to protect the natural wonders of the shrinking nation.³¹ The article goes on to say that Governor Rockefeller, the New York Conservation Commission, as well as the Federal Power Commission had been “bombarded” with appeals from members of the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference to halt construction of the Storm King plant on the Hudson. L. O. Rothschild, who was the chairman of the Trail Conference, was named the president of Scenic Hudson. He expressed that the pressure on legislatures should be magnified in

³⁰ “Fight is Widened on Hudson Plants,” *New York Times*, November 17, 1963.

³¹ Gottlieb, 60.

order to defend the “Hudson’s scenic riches.”³² By simply looking at the name of the organization and studying the interest of its members, it is quite easily seen that the Conference was only concerned with protecting the scenic significance of the Hudson.

In reaction to the continuation of the state legislatures’ apathy, Scenic Hudson increased its fight against Storm King, in addition to reaching out to other national conservation organizations for support. The group announced that it would take new measures, including “fund-raising and closer liaison with the Nature Conservancy in Washington and other organizations,” in order to fight Con Edison’s proposed hydroelectric plant. The newly appointed secretary, Richard Allen, pledged a “vigorous full-time campaign against industrialization of the Hudson highlands.” He continued to express that the conference was discontent with the Federal Power Commission, which seemed to feel “if Con Ed is going to destroy the natural beauty of the area it might as well wring every possible drop of power out of the project.”³³

At this point, Scenic Hudson remained solely concerned with scenery. Scenic Hudson was not only looking to prevent the construction of the Storm King plant, but also “wanted Black Rock Forest and other natural areas of the highlands saved for park, recreational and scientific uses in anticipation of a ‘tremendous population growth’ in the metropolitan area.” Once again, Scenic Hudson expressed its concern about not only the prevention of the Storm King plant, but also the entire preservation of the storied Hudson Highlands. Similarly, Scenic Hudson remained firmly opposed FPC’s pro-development stance. While most consumers would have likely desired the possibility of lower prices from the electric utilities, those in the Conference valued the intrinsic value of the view of

³² “Fight is Widened on Hudson Plants,” *New York Times*, November 17, 1963.

³³ “Hudson Group Plans Con Ed Opposition,” *New York Times*, June 24, 1964.

Storm King Mountain more than the possibility of decreased electricity prices; they didn't seem to take into consideration an alternative valuation of Storm King. Scenic Hudson had proposed that gas or steam turbine or jet-engine generating facilities be constructed in substitution to the Storm King plant.³⁴ Much like the wilderness movement that preceded it, Scenic Hudson remained unyielding in its ideals. Unlike the environmentalism that would develop later in the decade, preservationists were concerned only with preservation; no other options could be legitimately explored without accepting defeat.

As of August 1964, Con Ed felt that the plant would not damage the aesthetics of the mountain, and the FPC, which had strong ties to the industry it supervised, also felt that the effects would be marginal. Meanwhile, Scenic Hudson's concern of preserving scenic value was constantly noted, yet disregarded. The Federal Power Commission approved the proposal of the Storm King plant, and the examiner "found little merit in the objections of Cornwall residents or of conservation groups." The FPC examiner went on to conclude that the \$160 million plant would both bring economic benefits to the Cornwall area while no adversely affect the beauty, or historical and recreational value of the mountain. The examiner claimed that this ruling confirmed that Consolidated Edison was consistent with the "preservation of the scenic and historical values of the Hudson River Valley."³⁵

The battle over the aesthetic impact of Storm King was rejoined months later. On October 8th, Scenic Hudson urged the FPC not to grant a license for construction for the plant on Storm King Mountain. In "U.S. Urged to Block Con Ed Power Plant," Dale E.

³⁴ Eileen Shanahan, "Con Ed is Upheld on Hudson Plant," *New York Times*, August 1, 1964.

³⁵ Shanahan, 1964; Tallbot, 118.

Doty, a former FPC member who was now the attorney for the Conference, filed a brief with the FPC suggesting that the plant was “a short-run palliative which solves nothing.” He continued to question whether the plant would best serve the public interest by providing cheaper, efficient electricity or by preserving scenic awesomeness of the mountain. He persisted to argue that the argument that the plant would not mar Storm King was ridiculous.³⁶ This statement by Doty brings into question both the interest of Scenic Hudson and the FPC. While more efficient and cheaper power would have benefited a wide array of people, the site “of one of America’s great scenic and historic landscapes” precious beyond monetary value. The tension between preservationists and those who believe in consummate development was likely at a pinnacle at this point in time. Although following World War II many began to view natural resources as amenities, the technological advancements resulting from industrialization of the period likely created an equally strong ideal of development.

Two months later the tension between those who supported versus those opposed to Storm King thickened. It was reported that, Governor Rockefeller gave his support to the plan for a power plant at Storm King Mountain. He suggested that, “in my judgment, the values of this project...outweigh the objections which have been raised to it.” In reaction to this, Leo Rothschild, president of Scenic Hudson, responded:

Nelson A. Rockefeller has a truly bad habit of deeply disappointing his real friends and supporters. Now, alas, he has done it again. Incomprehensible is the only word, truly descriptive of the Governor’s flat-footed failure to use his influence to help enable the citizens of this state to make their own decision regarding the future uses of the Hudson River and its great valley.

³⁶ “Governor Backs Storm King Plant,” *New York Times*, December 12, 1964.

Rothschild continued to state that Scenic Hudson would continue its fight to prevent the construction of the plant. Scenic Hudson remained opposed to the project even though Rockefeller guaranteed that Con Ed had “revised its construction plans at the cost of several millions of dollars so that esthetic and scenic values in the area can be preserved.”³⁷ Rockefeller also felt that the deficiency of cheap power would inhibit future businesses from developing in New York City. Rothschild’s disappointment in Rockefeller expressed that many believed Rockefeller to be a supporter of conservation issues. Nelson Rockefeller’s brother, Laurance, was one of the leading conservationists in the country, and was a member of the Palisades Interstate Park Commission. However, since Laurance was a proponent of “multiple uses” of natural resources he supported the Storm King project.³⁸ This must have come as a great disappointment to Scenic Hudson; older conservation ideals that were rooted in economic development no longer seemed adequate to preservationist. Additionally, the fact that Scenic Hudson took no solace in Rockefeller’s claim that Con Ed had made expensive adjustments in order contain the detriment to the mountain, demonstrates that “nature lovers” had little if no trust in industry to appeal to their concerns. Rockefeller’s belief in “multiple sources” emphasized the stress between the older, more established, and economically viable conservationist ethic, and that of preservationist, which likely held less political weight due to the de-emphasis of economic development. For a political leader to appeal to the concerns of a marginal interest group, and neglect economic interest was highly unlikely. Regardless of Scenic Hudson’s disappointment in Rockefeller’s response, it was political consistent that he would support the project. However, in order to diffuse the dissent of

³⁷ “Governor Backs Storm King Plant,” *New York Times*, December 12, 1964.

³⁸ Dunwell, 281, 283.

Storm King opponents, Governor Rockefeller established the Hudson River Valley Commission to consider how to best protect the resources, scenery, and historic value of the Valley, and appointed his brother as Chairman.³⁹

As time passed and the dispute progressed beyond the conservationist versus preservationist standoff, more people came to be aware and concerned with addressing the growing number issues that arose with the construction of the Storm King, which had not previously received considerable attention prior to 1965. In “Nation and State Clash Over River,” one “river dweller” claimed that the continuous disputes regarding the Hudson River Valley had caused “the re-discovery of the Hudson.”⁴⁰ As more concrete concerns regarding the pollution of the Hudson’s waters arose, the Storm King plan found itself under increased criticism, which led to even more review of the proposal. In “Con Ed May Shift Storm King Plan,” written in February 24th, 1966, it is reported that Con Ed considered putting the hydroelectric plant at Storm King underground. Since the FPC had to review the plan a second time after its initial approval of the plant in early 1965 due to an appeal by Scenic Hudson, Con Ed began to seek alternative options. However, the rising opposition to Storm King began to produce attitude changes at higher levels. Even Governor Rockefeller rescinded his support for Storm King, suggesting, “if another solution can be found, then it should be.”⁴¹ Scenic Hudson’s fight against Con Edison was clearly starting to have an impact. Scenic Hudson’s resiliency had likely altered the Governor’s take on the issue, in addition to forcing Con Edison to rethink their proposal that they had held steadfastly for years. Although Governor Rockefeller had

³⁹ Winks, 167-169.

⁴⁰ Phillips McCandlish, “Nation and State Clash Over River,” *New York Times*, July 26, 1965.

⁴¹ Thomas O’Toole, “Con Ed May Shift Storm King Plan,” *New York Times*, February 24, 1966.

steadfastly supported Con Ed since the Storm King proposal, the mounting opposition, and his brother's change of heart enabled him to rescind of his support by 1966. Although Laurance Rockefeller wished to make a "multiple uses" example of Storm King, while serving on the Hudson River Valley Commission he realized that his support for the project was unreasonable, and began to align himself with emerging environmentalists.⁴²

Even though earlier in 1966 it appeared that Scenic Hudson seemed to be making headway, especially due to the shift in Rockefeller's opposition, Con Edison remained committed to the construction of the Storm King plant. Furthermore, support for the plant was emerging from the local Storm King communities, who were absent beforehand. McCandlish Phillips reported that local communities, such as Cornwall testified during the FPC hearings that they were strongly in favor of the Storm King plant. The plant was viewed as an economic godsend that would also help the scenery and recreation. The town supervisor of the town of Cornwall suggested that this construction would invite other industry to come to the area. Even though "few areas in the world that compare in scenic spectacle" to the Storm King Mountain section of the Hudson Highlands, he concluded that project would "be one of improvement," especially since Con Edison would now provide a mile-long, 50-acre waterfront park [with] a swimming pool, tennis courts, baseball diamond and open land area," as an extra incentive. Mr. Cameron testified that Cornwall was:

"Overwhelmingly in favor of the project because it "could add two to three times the assessed valuation current on the Cornwall tax rolls," provide "scenic and recreational improvement," replace a stretch of waterfront now in a "generally rundown condition," and "act as a stimulant to Orange County's" economy.

⁴² Winks, 170-171.

Although a previous witness felt that the Con Edison's proposed "park" was an inadequate trade for the "taking over by the utility of a chunk of the Black Rock Forest preserve," a representative of the Black Rock Fish and Game Club of Cornwall stated that its 689 members were unanimously for the project.⁴³ This article suggested that many citizens of Cornwall valued a new park more than the preservation of Storm King. This twist of fate pitted locals' necessities against the desires of wealthier city-dwellers. Here, the intention of Scenic Hudson only to promote their sole interest in preservation was made evident. Likely, no consideration of the economic benefit that the hydroplant would produce for the town of Cornwall was seriously explored. In the FPC testimony the Fish and Game Club did not appreciate the mountain's magnificent because it was simply inaccessible, unkempt, and the surrounding area was downtrodden, undermining preservationist's definition of "scenic." It was believed that the project would make the mountain more accessible.⁴⁴ Keeping the mountain "pristine" would have made preservationists happy, but the best interests of those living in the town and their perspective of the mountain was rarely taken into consideration by the press. This was the first and only time that the requests of the local residents were considered.

Approximately six years after its initial proposal, the Storm King dilemma was still saturated in opposition of preservationist. However, the Storm King plan seemed to once again garnering support that seemingly would result in its construction. It was reported that the F.P.C examiner recommended that the Con Edison plant be permitted. The examiner both felt that "there was no 'evidentiary support' for claims of opponents of the project 'that these installations would scar and change scenic values associated

⁴³ McCandlish, 1966.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

with the mountain.” He continued to state that there were no “suitable alternatives to the Storm King Mountain project that would create an equally reliable power supply for New York City.” As well, there was “no proof that the installation would be a significant hazard to fish life.” The examiner reiterated that the Storm King, though a magnificent scene, it “is not an area of untouched natural beauty.”⁴⁵ Much like the Hudson River School artists who had emerged decades before, preservationists envisioned a pristine Hudson River Valley when it was far from the truth. The Hudson River School artists emerged at following the beginning of the industrial revolution of the late 1800s. They often illustrated romanticized scenery of the Hudson River Valley, yet when others went to see these spectacular sites portrayed in this painting, visitors were disappointed to find nothing of the sort. Likewise, preservationists obviously overlooked the deformities of Storm King Mountain in exchange for emphasizing other features.

Around this time, fish health began to emerge as a new issue at the forefront of the Storm King Case. Obviously fish stability had become a means of opposition to Storm King, enough so that the Hudson River Fishermen’s Association was created in 1966. The Association formed because fishermen believed that the Storm King plant would destroy fish hatcheries, yet one of the studies by the Hudson River Valley Commission confirmed that the plant would not kill a dramatically large percent of young striped bass.⁴⁶ In response, the Scenic Hudson strengthened its resolve by now including more ecological issues, such as fishery stability, in order to present more tangible evidence against construction. In December of 1969, Scenic Hudson now contended that “the plant would jeopardize the Catskill aqueduct, the Hudson River fisheries and the salt

⁴⁵ Shanahan, 1968.

⁴⁶ David Bird, “Con Ed is Backed by Hudson Study,” *New York Times*, December 14, 1969.

and fresh water balance in the river.” The article mentioned that that Scenic Hudson had been able to reverse the FPC approval of the plant in 1965, and now had intentions of doing the same after the FPC approved the plant earlier in the week. A year after a \$459,000 study done by the Hudson River Policy Committee, Scenic Hudson still contended that the fish would be harmed, due to research done by Bob Boyle of the Hudson River Fisherman’s Association. Later in the article, a representative of Scenic Hudson acknowledged the need for more hydroelectric power, but felt that “there were other sites outside the Hudson River Valley available for construction of a power plant.”⁴⁷ This statement found Scenic Hudson in a transitional phase; Scenic Hudson began using ecological arguments to prevent construction at some points, yet still had a “not in my backyard” attitude that were rooted in preservation concerns. It appeared that Scenic Hudson only cared about preserving the Hudson River; they utilized ecological arguments to prevent the Storm King plant, but then contended that there were other places where hydroplants would be acceptable, without taking into consideration the problems that may have arose elsewhere.

For the following years the Storm King case remained in a cycle of being approved and appealed all the way to the Supreme Court. By the end of 1971, the plant received a construction license again from the F.P.C., even after Scenic Hudson contended that the project would injure water quality.⁴⁸ Then again in June of 1972 the Supreme Court rejected appeals by Scenic Hudson.⁴⁹ In March of 1973, New York State’s Court of Appeals upheld the state’s decision that the plant would not endanger

⁴⁷ “Scenic Hudson Plans New Fight on Con Ed,” *The Evening News*, Newburgh, N.Y., December 30, 1969.

⁴⁸ Lubasch, Arnold H., “Conservationists Ask New Hearing on Con Ed Plan,” *New York Times*, November 7, 1971.

⁴⁹ “High Court Bars Storm King Plaza,” *New York Times*, June 20, 1972.

water quality standards. However, the state's Commissioner of Environmental Conservation said "the project might do irreparable harm to the scenic beauty of the Hudson River gorge, where the waterway cuts through a deep valley."

Mr. Diamond said he also did not want to see the conservationists lose their fight against Storm King "because it is the symbol of the first legal victory for the environment, a landmark decision saying you have to look at the environmental impact of a project."⁵⁰

Even during the case, many recognized the environmental significance that this interplay would have on the future of environmental protection. Con Edison's board chairman stated that, "When we look at the alternatives, from the standpoint of conservation, this is the best project we can build, assuming we are going to meet the needs of our customers."⁵¹ By July Con Edison chief executive said construction of the plant was good news for conservation. "Storm King Mountain has been saved," he claimed, "Storm King Mountain will look exactly the same as it does now when our project is completed." He continued, "We are urging conservation as company and national policy. No project has been so thoroughly tested as this project. It will give you a tax base to keep much of the character of your community."⁵² Con Edison, like Laurance Rockefeller previously, seemed to be supporting the "multiple use" of natural resources while considering this sort of development as conservation.

Whereas the fish safety argument was once disregarded, the fish argument began to develop into a more compelling circumstance for prevention of the plant. Originally one of Con Edison's scientists suggested that the maximum effect of the Storm King project would have the effect of a "single active sports fisherman" on striped bass egg

⁵⁰ David Bird, "Court Backs Con Ed On Storm King Plan," *New York Times*, March 15, 1973.

⁵¹ Christopher S. Wren, "Con Edison Vows Storm King Start," *New York Times*, July 26, 1973.

⁵² Robert Richards, "Con Ed Says Project Aids Conservation," *The Evening News*, July 26, 1973.

life.⁵³ In December of 1973 a preliminary report by an Atomic Energy Commission laboratory estimated that the Storm King power project might kill as many as 75 percent of the annual hatch of striped bass in the Hudson. This finding was obviously of huge significance, enough so that Scenic Hudson gained back hope of preventing construction. These findings circulated at Scenic Hudson and the Hudson River Fisherman's Association, enabling them to renew the petition the United States Circuit Court of Appeals to prevent Con Edison's construction.⁵⁴ These statistics eventually halted construction that began in April of 1974. "New Storm King Hearings Ordered" reported that in unanimous decision, a Federal Court of Appeals ordered to immediately reopen the hearings of the Storm King plant, because the possibility of killing the Hudson's fish life had not been "adequately" considered. Critics further suggested that the plant would "endanger fish populations all along the Eastern Seaboard." The hearings for the Storm King case were then to be reopened on October 8th of 1974, in order to address "the striped bass question, not on that of fuel efficiency or any of the other issues opponents have raised. The other issues have been settled to the FPC's satisfaction."⁵⁵ In the FPC admitting that the safety of the bass was worthy of reopening the Storm King case highlights that ecology concerns supported by science were completely legitimate. Whereas Scenic Hudson's previous appeals based on scenery and water quality were shot down, fish safety was deemed to be a more reasonable reason for the prevention of the plant.

Now that Scenic Hudson was gaining respectability they began to mention other concerns that they felt would resonate with legislators. Since the estimated cost of the

⁵³ Winks, 170.

⁵⁴ "Report Says Storm King Plant May Peril 75% of Bass in River," *New York Times*, December 16, 1973.

⁵⁵ "New Hearings on Storm King Begin Oct. 8," *The Evening News*, August 19, 1974.

project had grown from \$115 to \$720 million, Scenic Hudson petitioned reconsideration of the plant due to economical infeasibility.⁵⁶ The suggestion of prohibiting the construction due to economical infeasibility for Con Ed customers by Scenic Hudson displayed that it was now taking into consideration a multitude of issues, whereas scenic value was their primary piece of evidence initially. Almost ironically, there appeared to be quite a strong relationship between Scenic Hudson's evidence of opposition and the cost of the plant. As more legitimate and diverse concerns of Scenic Hudson began to be presented it forced continued review, resulting in a higher cost due to the time delay. Consequently the U.S. Department of the Interior requested that the F.P.C. fully reopened the hearings for the Storm King plant, because the construction license for the plant had expired in 1975. Once again, Scenic Hudson took this time to suggest that the license should have been revoked in the face of the fish review by the F.P.C.⁵⁷

Another twist of fate occurred in 1977. A major blackout brought the Storm King plan to once again become a hotly debated topic. While Con Edison held that the Storm King plant would have prevented the blackout, Scenic Hudson suggested the alternative of jet engine turbines should have been located at various locations in New York City in order to generate more local power for the city.⁵⁸ Even in the face of an energy crisis even more resistance arose in 1979, when the Department of Environmental Conservation asked the Federal Government to revoke the license of the Storm King project, because it no longer made economic sense because peak energy requirement had decrease by almost 4,000 megawatts; in 1979 the estimated cost of the plant would be approximately \$1

⁵⁶ David Bird, "New Storm King Hearings Ordered; Aid for Con Edison Stalled in Albany," *New York Times*, May 9, 1974.

⁵⁷ Ward Poche, "New Con Ed Setback Is Hinted," *The Evening News*, January 28, 1975.

⁵⁸ "Storm King No Blackout Cure: Environmentalist," *The Evening News*, August 3, 1977.
"Con Ed Laments Lack of Storm King Power," *The Evening News*, December 29, 1977.

billion.⁵⁹ Whereas at the beginning of the project the energy produced by the plant would be a great source of cheap and stable energy, 17 years later this energy would be nothing of the sort.

Finally in 1980, Con Edison admitted, “We lost the fight.” The *New York Times* reported on December 20th. They reported that on the 19th Con Edison agreed to halt construction at Storm King Mountain and would donate the 500-acre site to be used as a park, concluding the 17-year dispute “with environmentalists and Government agencies over the preservation of river life.”⁶⁰ As presented, the threat to the health of the fisheries of the river was the major roadblock for the construction of the Storm King plant. The scenic concerns of Scenic Hudson proved to be hiccups that delayed the project. The delay caused by the major fish issue, as well as a multitude of smaller issues resulted in the extreme economic infeasibility of the plant. While this appeared to be a real victory for many, others were distraught with the fact that the Con Edison plant would not be constructed. *The Evening News* of Newburgh, N.Y. wrote:

The environmentalists are happy...they will get their wish: The beautiful Storm King, to all appearances (from a distance) will remain unspoiled in all its pristine impressiveness.

In this article, *The Evening News* noted that it had strongly supported the construction of the Storm King plant. They pointed out that the view of Storm King as “unspoiled” was an illusion, and that all who have traveled along the roadways of the mountain could easily view the true polluted state of the mountain. The article then suggests that Scenic Hudson, the Sierra Club, and others who had fought for the preservation of Storm King

⁵⁹ Ari L. Goldman, Ari. L, “Con Edison Project Meets New Setback,” *New York Times*, February 18, 1979

⁶⁰ Jill, Smolowe, “Con Ed to Drop Storm King Plant As Part of Pact to Protect Hudson,” *New York Times*, December 20, 1980.

should now diligently apply themselves in cleaning up the trash that litters the mountainside. The article concluded:

Their work should not stop now that the battle for the “cause” has been successful. Their work is just beginning... Then, and only then, can the environmentalists justly claim a victory... a real victory.⁶¹

Whereas, the early Con Edison fight by Scenic Hudson was solely rooted in preserving the mountain, Scenic Hudson’s concerns developed in reaction to the uncovering of knowledge of other environmental issues, such as water quality and fish health. Scenic Hudson, in collaboration had been able to produce and emphasize hard scientific evidence suggesting the detrimental effect that the plant would have on the ecosystems of the river. On the other hand, Con Edison’s studies were eventually shown to be “biased, incomplete, and incompetent” further emphasizing the disregard by the corporation.⁶² By the end of the project, even though many were unhappy with the final result of Scenic Hudson’s fight, Scenic Hudson had in fact transformed from a preservationist group into a progressive environmental group concerned with a wide host of issues. *The Evening News* article demonstrated that many, rightfully so, were enraged by the wilderness movement tendencies of Scenic Hudson, while concurrently challenging Scenic Hudson to continue to develop into a pioneering environmental organization. Regardless of the varying goals and public perception of Scenic Hudson, the Storm King case set a precedent for future environmental groups, while simultaneously providing one of many cases that prevented the Hudson River Valley from becoming unrecognizable due to development.

⁶¹ “Storm King Victory?,” *The Evening News*, December 21, 1980.

⁶² Winks, 164.

The Floating Classroom: The Hudson River Sloop Clearwater

Following the proposal of the Storm King plant, the inception of Scenic Hudson enabled Hudson Valley residents to feel more apt to become concerned about the river, because such much research was being done on functioning of the river. One notable resident who became concerned with the river early was folk-singer Pete Seeger. Seeger is noted as the founder of the Hudson River Sloop Restoration, which eventually created the sloop *Clearwater*. Like the secondary source histories regarding the *Clearwater* and Seeger, newspaper articles of the time writing about the subject also introduce varied overviews of the effect that the *Clearwater* and Seeger had both on the Hudson River and the grander environmental movement. Many regional newspapers appear to have exaggerated the effects of the *Clearwater* in order to provide a “feel good” local story. Yet in general, newspaper articles about the *Clearwater* paint a very similar picture to those of historical records, presented in either Seeger biographies or Hudson River histories. Discrepancies do exist between the two, yet much of this can be attributed to the time at which they were written. The primary articles vividly illustrated how *Clearwater*’s goals and operations altered throughout time, as reaction to the novelty of the organization. The *Clearwater*’s functions were very much so a response to both the increased knowledge about the river gained in result to the Storm King case, and the consequent developments that would arise in result to increased research. *Clearwater* was birthed in an era when the river was not fully understood, however subsequent findings would be occurring rapidly.

Seeger had bought his first sailboat in 1959, while living in Beacon, N.Y. While sailing he began to notice the horrid condition of the Hudson River. In reaction to this

new perspective Seeger wrote the first of many folk songs that were to be used to protest the pollution of rivers by the Clearwater organization in 1961. The song “My Dirty Stream,” illustrated the singer sailing up the polluted Hudson, who vowed that the Hudson would once again run clear. This song was critical of the mistreatment of the river, yet the singer was only left to only dream of a time when the river would flow pristine in all its glory.⁶³ In 1963 Victor Schwartz had lent Seeger the book *Sloops of the Hudson*, which intensified Seeger’s interest in sailing. Seeger began proposing the construction of one of these ships in order to draw attention to the condition of the river.⁶⁴ By 1965, Seeger and others had initiated the Hudson River Sloop Restoration, Inc., to build a boat that would educate and get people involved in combating the pollution of the Hudson.⁶⁵ By 1969 Seeger’s visionary idea of constructing a sloop was beginning to materialize. He created the Clearwater organization in 1969, later named the Hudson River Sloop Clearwater, which focused specifically on the future construction of a boat. At the same time he began proposing to friends that they assemble hundreds of families together to begin constructing the sloop.⁶⁶

Some of the first notable articles about the *Clearwater* are from the *New York Times*. “Sloop With a Mission to Sail the Hudson” by Parton Keese focused primarily on the choice of the name, membership, and the funding for the construction of the sloop, before the sloop was even completed. It mentioned that a noteworthy financial supporter was the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, who donated \$10,000. Beside these concerns little

⁶³ Dunwell, 297.

⁶⁴ Dunaway, David King. *How Can I Keep from Singing?: The Ballad of Pete Seeger*. New York: Villard Books, 1981. 351-352.

⁶⁵ K. Harrington-Hughes and D.V.F. “Clearwater Sails for Cleaner Hudson” (*Water Pollution Control Federation*, Vol. 51, No. 2 1979), 219.

⁶⁶ Dunwell, 298.

mention of the “mission” of the *Clearwater* was presented until the very last sentence. The article ends, “It all goes toward cleaning up the Hudson...” This unspecific suggestion failed to define how about the sloop will go about cleaning the Hudson, inadvertently acknowledging the lack of clarity for the strategy of the *Clearwater*.⁶⁷ Similarly, there is an account from the day that the *Clearwater* was first placed in the water of Maine, on May 19th 1969. In “Copy of Old Hudson Sloop Is Launched” it was mentioned that 2,500 people traveled to the shipyard and gathered for the celebration; notably “Steven C. Rockefeller who represented his father, Governor Rockefeller of New York.”⁶⁸ By Gov. Rockefeller taking the effort to send his son as a representative to this event, he demonstrated his authentic interest in the completion of the *Clearwater*. At this point in time, especially to the public, the *Clearwater* was simply an idea; its mission had yet to be clearly stated. However, the Rockefellers’ interest and financial support recognized the simple reproduction of a sloop as a worthy accomplishment. Whereas Rockefeller initially opposed Scenic Hudson in the Storm King, he demonstrated his full support for *Clearwater*; evidently the Storm King case had drastically altered his perception of environmental issues to come. This piece is also extremely rare, because it recognized the *Clearwater* as simply a reconstruction of a Hudson River historical landmark, rather than a possible vehicle for environmental activism.

However, it did not take long for the *Clearwater* to gain attention beyond its intrinsic value. In “Sloop Will Sail Up the Hudson In Campaign for Clean Water,” written on August 2nd 1969, Douglas Robinson wrote that the *Clearwater* was a “part of a low-key fight against pollution of the Hudson River.” Less than three months following

⁶⁷ Parton Keese, “Sloop With a Mission to Sail the Hudson,” *New York Times*, Mar 14, 1969, 33.

⁶⁸ “Copy of Old Hudson Sloop Is Launched,” *New York Times*, May 19, 1969.

its construction, the *Clearwater* was already noted as a symbol of activism; this reflected that there was a plan for the future of the sloop beyond a simple historical reconstruction. This statement by Robinson is also interesting because the acknowledgement of the *Clearwater* as a passive means of activism was seemingly rare in comparison to other later literature. In addition, later in the article, Seeger is quoted as saying:

Ours is a soft-sell job...we want to bring tens of thousands of people to the water's edge so they can see that their waterway can be fun. After that it will be up to each person what he wants to do about pollution. Until people start to love their river, it's going to be a sewer.⁶⁹

Once again, by Seeger using a quote such as this rather than a more ambitious mission statement suggests that the *Clearwater* was simply a means to urge people to fight pollution of the river on a personal level. The *Clearwater* was often presented as an end in itself in much of the other literature; its mere presence was a sign of activism. Yet at this point, the *Clearwater* was simply a boat that brought attention to the water quality of the Hudson, to allow residents to be inspired by the river and go back into their communities and demand change.

Press coverage immediately after the ship's construction illustrated that Seeger and company had an immediate plan for the ship, but didn't have definitive expectations for a sustained role in environmental activism on the Hudson. Naomi Rock's "Hope to Restore Lost Beauty To Hudson; Befouled By Man," of August 18th 1969, produced a very typical story on the *Clearwater*. The sloop is acknowledged as Seeger's "baby," and he hoped, "to bring tens of thousands of people to the water's edge—to help them love their river again." He continued, "Beyond this we have no specific plans. It will be up to

⁶⁹ Douglas Robinson, "Sloop Will Sail Up the Hudson In Campaign for Clean Water," *New York Times*, Aug 2, 1969.

the people to see that the terribly polluted Hudson is made clean again.”⁷⁰ This suggestion by Seeger is quite noteworthy; after spending years of planning and \$182,000 later, all Seeger can say is that he hopes that the ship can bring people to the river, and hopefully they will find ways to clean it up. The article later gives an example of a teacher who initially thought that the Hudson was very clean, but the *Clearwater* festival taught her otherwise. Even with this new information, no mention of the ways to clean up the river is given to festival-goers. Although this article depicts the *Clearwater* in as positive of a light as possible, it appears that there was little planning as to what the *Clearwater* would do in the future. This example proved to be bitter sweet; this woman’s awareness was raised, but no avenue of action was suggested. At first, Seeger and others believed that the beauty of the historic boat would bring many to the riverside, however it appeared that the novelty of seeing the boat might wear off. If Pete Seeger didn’t know what people will do after coming to the river’s edge, how could he have expected common citizens, who were not likely environmentalists, to clean up the river following their visit? This sentiment was also reflected in “Sloop on Voyage to Purify Hudson Spreads Zeal and Song” by Murray Schumach, which was also written in August 1969, on the 28th. Schumach wrote:

The purpose of the Clearwater’s visit was to reawaken the interest of parents and children in the once lordly Hudson, making them aware of the polluted river’s plight and to set them thinking of ways of purifying it and making its banks places of beauty.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Naomi Rock, “Hope to Restore Lost Beauty To Hudson; Befouled By Man,” *Wellsville Daily Reporter* (Wellsville, N.Y.), August 18, 1969.

⁷¹ Murray Schumach, “Sloop on Voyage to Purify Hudson Spreads Zeal and Song,” *New York Times*, Aug 28, 1969.

This statement reinforced much about the early history of the *Clearwater*; it was a tool to bring people to the Hudson so they can think of ways to take action to clean the river, but at this point the pollution abatement activities was left to the individual.

Not all coverage embraced *Clearwater* uncritically. An estimated 7,000 people, including local and county officials visited a weekend festival centered on the *Clearwater*. One author began their article: “the people came back to Newburgh’s decaying waterfront...spurred by the appearance of the Hudson River sloop *Clearwater*.” By using the word “decaying” to explain the riverside, it would appear that the author would use this contrast to describe the *Clearwater* as a beacon of hope, like many had done, yet the author avoids this. The journalist even points out that there was a fire nearby in “the ghetto,” at the same time as the festival. Although completely irrelevant to the story, the mention of this event emphasizes the author’s indifference to the excitement of the festival-goers. This side note may be suggesting that the reporter felt the urban and industrial decay of Newburgh was more of a pressing issue than its rotting waterfront. Also, with the last line the author stated that: “Its backers hope it will inspire a cleanup campaign of the river, even though they admit that the sloop is adding to the Hudson’s pollution by dumping its sewage into it.”⁷² With this leaving sentiment, the writer subtly demonstrates their cynicism of the *Clearwater*, which was rarely found in early publications about the sloop. This article illustrated that the *Clearwater* became a reason for celebration very early in its history, yet due to the time period, and the likely negative attitude of the writer, the sloop is not romanticized, although the 7,000 enthused festival-goers reported could have allowed it to be so. To this particular journalist it was simply a ship; it’s not going to save the world. Obviously this critical sentiment is not widely held.

⁷² “Newburgh Greets The *Clearwater*,” *Middletown Times Herald Record*, August 25, 1969.

It was likely that a similar festival to the one depicted in Newburgh occurred in Nyack, N.Y. at one of the town's "Sounds of Summer" series. Although the setting of these two events were likely comparable, the perception of the events could not be more different. One of these dates was focused on a visit from "Pete Seeger and the Hudson River Sloop." The sloop had "been traveling on the Hudson River this summer, bringing attention to the waterfront communities the fact of her anti-pollution crusade."⁷³ Unlike previous articles, which simply acknowledged the *Clearwater* for its ability to draw people to the riverside, this article states the pollution of the Hudson as *Clearwater's* crusade, while no other groups' involvement was mentioned. Although reducing pollution of the river was always the goal of the *Clearwater*, this profession may make the article be one the first definitive article that began to depict the *Clearwater* as something of grand significance. Rather than simply inspiring others to deal with pollution, *Clearwater* was presented as an active force in reducing pollution.

Whereas the public had yet to perceive that *Clearwater* was at the forefront of the crusade against the pollution of the Hudson River, although those closely involved with *Clearwater* likely felt this way. An example of the faith that those working with the *Clearwater* can be seen overtly in the folk songs written about the boat. In "The Ballad of the *Clearwater*," written in 1969 by Bud Foote, the *Clearwater* is the messiah of the river. In the first few verses the entire world is horrible shape, yet when the *Clearwater* comes down the river and the tides begin to turn. By the sixth verse:

The mountains rang, the children laughed, and women raised a song.
 The bison thundered down the plains one hundred thousand strong.
 The ghost-dance tent was raised again, the lion wandered free
 And the river ran like silver from the mountains to the sea.
 There was love and joy and brotherhood and peace the world around,

⁷³ "'Sounds of Summer' fights Hudson Pollution." *Oneonta Star*, September 6, 1969.

Life and paint and energy and trees and taste and sound.
 And Abiyoyo danced a solemn waltz out in the fen
 When they brought the sloop *Clearwater* a-sailing round the bend.⁷⁴

Here the *Clearwater* was hailed as the redemption of the Hudson River, which has the ability to magically clean the water, all the while bringing peace to the world. The songwriters illustrated how polluted the Hudson was by anthropomorphizing both the river and the creatures living within it. Industrialization was killing the river and the *Clearwater* and personal action were the only way to make the river usable for future generations.

The construction of the *Clearwater* occurred at a major turning point of the environmental movement. By 1970, environmental concerns had transitioned from a local concern to a national issue. It was becoming obvious that local mobilization would not be able to combat the externalities of corporate pollution. The urge for federal aid came to a head on Earth Day on April 22nd 1970 when millions rallied, most notably in Washington D.C.⁷⁵ Earth Day marked the beginning of a new movement; unlike the preservationist movement that preceded it, environmentalism now emphasized new forms of environmental policy and management based on the cleanup and control of pollution.⁷⁶ Earth Day recognized that environmental concerns were authentic concerns of all Americans. The time at which the *Clearwater* was constructed was highly reflective of this. Initially, Seeger and company likely believed basic grassroots tactics of the *Clearwater* to be sufficient when the boat was being planned. Yet by 1970 the call for more direct protest was necessary, explaining *Clearwater's* abrupt change from low-key

⁷⁴ Edward Renehan, ed. *The Clearwater Songbook*. New York: G. Schirmer, (1980), pg. 9.

⁷⁵ D.T. Kuzmiak. "The American Environmental Movement," *The Geographical Journal* 157, (1991), 269.

⁷⁶ Gottlieb, 35.

environmental activism to that which is displayed by *Clearwater's* trip to Washington D.C. for Earth Day.

Earth Day clearly played a part in the shift of mission for the *Clearwater*. In April 1970, "Clearwater Carrying Pollution Drive to Washington" appeared in the *New York Times*. In the article, the *Clearwater* was taking "its campaign against pollution to Washington for Earth Day Ceremonies." The use of "its" suggests that the *Clearwater* was the primary participant concerned with the state of the river, although more individuals and organizations beside *Clearwater* were involved. The use of this vocabulary both simplifies the reality of the concern for the Hudson, in addition to overemphasizing the *Clearwater's* involvement in the river. Seeger was quoted as saying:

We've sailed for a year now up and down the river showing people what the river used to be, how it's polluted now and what it can be, but now we're going to Washington because the problems of the American rivers can't be solved by people like me who live on them. Only the Federal Government has the power to enact and enforce the laws that are needed.⁷⁷

With this statement, Seeger recognized the limits of the *Clearwater's* original strategy; while simply bringing people to the river and getting them to question what they can do to stop pollution was valuable, this strategy could not produce dramatic results without Federal support. Therefore, the *Clearwater*, less than a year after its construction, had remodeled its objectives. The *Clearwater* was no longer portrayed as a part of the "low-key" Hudson River cleanup effort, but now it was shown as a vehicle to seek aid from the only means of redemption for the Hudson River, the federal government.

With Earth Day, the *Clearwater* had the ability to begin to be utilized vehicle of environmental protest for the future, by hitching onto the heightened public interest due

⁷⁷ "Clearwater Carrying Pollution Drive to Washington," *New York Times*, April 15, 1970.

to Earth Day. Some journalists painted a grim and hopeless present and immediate future for the Hudson River. One article begins:

The Hudson River, the state's loveliest sewer, picks up human waste in the Adirondacks and flows it gently 315 miles to New York to mingle with big-city deposits. Along the way it gathers assorted contributions: chicken blood at Troy, drug chemicals at Rensselaer, paper-making residue in Columbia County—not to mention the marinated Mohawk River with its tannery dyes from Gloversville and assorted offal from the North country.⁷⁸

Doyle continued to bitterly refute every claim that the river was healthy or would soon run clean. Following paragraphs of angst-ridden text, the author presented a previously recorded interview of Pete Seeger and Hal Cohen, president of the sloop committee. Here, Seeger states that the *Clearwater's* role was simply to let people know there's a problem; this statement may have suggested that Seeger and other Clearwater members considered the Earth Day trip to be simply extracurricular. When asked if they have seen evidence that the *Clearwater* was making people aware of the pollution, Seeger emphatically responds yes. He continued to say that thousands have opened their eyes to the problem and began asking, "What can I do?" The people of *Clearwater* told these new and ambitious environmentalists to "first, 'do some reading,'" and then "you can join some sort of organization." Seeger then goes on to essentially give many examples of how one could reduce their waste on a personal level. Seeger also expresses that he believed that because such a diverse group of people have the river in common, the sloop would give initiative to get "everyone" involved.⁷⁹ Whereas in the past Seeger didn't have instructions for enthused *Clearwater* visitors, within a year he quickly realized that using the *Clearwater* to simply show people the river was not sufficient, more concrete examples of personal responsibility were required to get tangible goals done. Once again

⁷⁸ Joan Doyle, "River Still But A Lovely Sewer," *Poughkeepsie Journal*, July 26, 1970.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

Earth Day's presence can be notice; following Earth Day there was a greater emphasize on tangible cleanup rather than simple valuation issues.

In all these articles, Seeger was mentioned as the key member and founder of both the Hudson River Sloop Clearwater and the Hudson River Sloop Singers. His singing performances are noted as a major way to draw people to awareness-raising events, and he was usually the only source of quotes regarding the organization early in its history. Although all of the early articles regarding the *Clearwater*, as most literature usually does, present Seeger in a positive light, one did diverge from this mold. In September 1970, "Hudson River Group Aide Quits in Protest on Seeger" was written. This article states how Donald Presutti, the vice president of the Hudson River Sloop Restoration Committee, Inc., resigned from his position because a vote had failed to pass to kick Seeger out of the organization. Presutti resigned as a result of Seeger's membership creating "a certain image" that had hampered the group's efforts to clean up the Hudson River. "He said today that he no longer wanted to be associated with the project because of the 'hippie types' that had been attracted to the antipollution effort by Mr. Seeger's participation in it."⁸⁰ To Presutti, Seeger's presence overshadowed the efforts of the organization to the point of inhibiting its effectiveness. Whereas Seeger's role as an unyielding idealist is traditionally depicted to be one of his great attributes, here this quality interfered with the goals of others, consequently chasing them away. An example such as this demonstrated that environmental movement might have been overambitious in trying to include such a diverse group of people. Here, even though the general goal between these two people was likely very similar, some sort of cultural divide inhibited the progression towards of goal desired by both parties.

⁸⁰ "Hudson River Group Aide Quits in Protest on Seeger," *New York Times*, September 28, 1970.

This string of events had no long-term effect on the way in which Seeger and Clearwater would be explained in the future, but the storylines did change in the immediate future, especially in terms of Seeger's involvement. By April 1971, the *Clearwater* started to be utilized as a classroom. "Sloop Becomes a Classroom in New Rochelle" begins:

The Hudson River sloop Clearwater, which has spent most of her one-year existence in the campaign against pollution on New York's waterways, has been embarked on a new project—that of a floating classroom for public school students.⁸¹

This article briefly mentioned Seeger as the chairman of Hudson River Sloop Restoration Inc., but does not acknowledge his involvement with this specific undertaking. By May 1971, in "Sloop is Saluted In Program Here" it was reported that a concert was put on in honor of the *Clearwater* when it was docked at the South Street Seaport.⁸² This article was one of the few not to mention Seeger's involvement in the organization at all.

The altered direction of the *Clearwater* was reflected even more so in "The Clearwater Hardens Her Fight Against Pollution," written in June 1973. This article speaks about how the *Clearwater* is beginning to, "point at specific polluters in the county where the ship is currently docked," with the release of pollution reports from EPA.

Its antipollution efforts are now focused more directly and forcefully than they were when the replica of the old sloops that was once plied the Hudson was launched in 1969, as part of what was then described as a low-key fight against water pollution... That low-key approach worked with some industries but now the Clearwater effort has turned to harsher and more precise accusations against those the group feels have not done their part in the clean-up.⁸³

⁸¹ "Sloop Becomes a Classroom in New Rochelle," *New York Times*, April 18, 1971.

⁸² John S. Wilson, "Sloop Is Saluted in Program Here: Clearwater Is Star in First of 'Concerts by the Sea,'" *New York Times*, May 30, 1971.

⁸³ David Bird, "The Clearwater Hardens Her Fight Against Pollution: Raising the Sails," *New York Times*, June 10, 1973.

This depicted Clearwater as a much more focused and active organization. Rather than simply drawing attention to the polluted river, Clearwater was now blaming specific businesses for environmental degradation in specific counties. The author, David Bird, also wrote that, “Pete Seeger does not spend as much time with the *Clearwater* as he once did.”⁸⁴ While this statement may be true, its wording illustrated that less involvement was Seeger’s personal choice, rather than his being forced out of the organization, which Dunaway suggested was the case in *How Can I Keep From Singing?* This admission by Bird may have implied to a reader that the switch in tactics may be very well correlated to Seeger’s absence. It’s important to note the lack of clarity surrounding this issue. John Cronin, who had begun to be involved with Clearwater around this time simply contended that the press’ presentation of Seeger was an illusion. Cronin explained that Seeger was not forced away from the organization or that he became less involved. Seeger reduce his leadership role because he felt the need for the organization to develop without him in terms of organization, but was still highly involved with other facets of *Clearwater’s* activities.⁸⁵ While this article is in comparison to other writings was quite accurate, it appears to overestimate the *Clearwater’s* presence in the fight against pollution, rather than just noting the *Clearwater* as a small player in a larger resistance to pollution. It appears that following Earth Day there was a great shift away from grassroots mobilization to activities that were much more active in nature. Like many protest movements, the environmental movement felt the need to become

⁸⁴ Bird, 1973.

⁸⁵ John Cronin, interview by Gregory Cannillo, Phone, February 21, 2011.

more aggressive in hope of becoming more effective. However, whether or not industries took these reports as serious threats or reason to reduce pollution is not explored.

Over the next five years, stories about the *Clearwater* became scarce. By 1973, in “Sloop Clearwater Draws More Than 1,000,” the *Clearwater* was noted for its annual pumpkin party that occurred in Newburgh, N.Y. The writer explains that approximately a thousand people came to the *Clearwater* to purchase a pumpkin and listen to folk singers, notably Seeger. The pumpkin rides were a way to raise money for cleaning up the river and for the maintenance of the sloop. The author ends the coverage by stating that the *Clearwater* “now runs classes on ecology for some 5,000 school students per year. An estimated 20,000 persons see it each year at dockside.”⁸⁶ At this point, it appeared that those at the Clearwater organization had come to realize at what level the sloop could be effective. *The Evening News* of Newburgh once again reflects Clearwater’s return to low-key activism in the press in 1974. Much like the festival held five years earlier, another festival occurred centered around the *Clearwater*, while “Pete Seeger of Beacon will be part of the entertainment;” those who boarded the ship were taught about the ecology of river.⁸⁷ This article seems to find the *Clearwater* and Seeger in comfortable positions. The *Clearwater* was an educational tool, and Seeger is a folk singer who strongly supports the educational mission of the sloop.

Now that the *Clearwater*’s mission had been solidified as an educational tool the *Clearwater* began to recede from press’ attention. However, in the following years the rotting of the ship once again drew the attention of those previously involved in the ship. In the Article “...And The Clearwater” from *The Daily Freeman* of Kingston N.Y.,

⁸⁶ “Sloop Clearwater Draws More Than 1,000,” *The Evening News*, October 22, 1973.

⁸⁷ “Clearwater Festivities in Sight,” *The Evening News*, July 29, 1974.

written in January of 1976, it was stated that the *Clearwater* would no longer sail if \$55,000 was not raised to restore the ship. Though this article was very brief, the concluding sentence speaks volumes about the public's commentary regarding the boat:

We wish those behind this venture luck and hope to see the sloop that Pete Seeger made famous again sail along the majestic Hudson River and remind Hudson Valley residents of our rich historical heritage.⁸⁸

Almost seven years following the construction of the sloop, Seeger was still viewed as the figurehead of the organization, although other sources suggested his lack of participation. Although the *Clearwater* was a noble effort, it was simply a boat that reminded Hudson Valley residents of their heritage.

Although the *Clearwater's* educational function was now unmistakable, journalists felt the need to suggest the symbolic importance of the sloop. Less than five months later, another article out of Kingston recorded the successful fundraising effort of the *Clearwater*. Its focus was the return of the *Clearwater* to its shipyard in Maine for reconstruction due to rotting. This article stated that \$80,000 was actually needed to repair the ship and successfully raised. The *Clearwater's* educational role was strongly noted, yet its grander affects might have been overstated:

She has been a sailing classroom, taking students onto the river and Long Island Sound so they can learn firsthand what their eco-system is like and what must be done to protect it. In seven years she has gained an international reputation as a symbol of environmental protection.⁸⁹

These two sentences of the article express a great deal about the boat and how it would come to be viewed in the future. The author first states that the ship was simply an ecological teaching tool, which operated on a very local level; then in the very next

⁸⁸ "...And The Clearwater," *The Daily Freeman*, January 29, 1976.

⁸⁹ "Clearwater Sails Home Today," *The Sunday Freeman*, June 6, 1976.

sentence the *Clearwater* is an international environmental icon. Whereas most articles recognized the *Clearwater* as either a simple teaching tool or as an environmental icon, not both at the same time, this author jumps from an objective to a grand subjective viewpoint in one sentence.

Elsewhere there are fundraising pleas for the reconstruction *Clearwater*, emphasizing the importance of having the *Clearwater* remain operational. “‘Mayday’ from the *Clearwater*” was quite repetitive of the Kingston articles, stating that the repair financial estimates have doubled for the restoration of the rotting sloop. However, unlike the previous articles, the *Clearwater* Pipewatch program was both noted and hailed as a significant source of monitoring the health of the Hudson. The often lack of consistency with these articles, acknowledges that it was difficult to define the essence of the *Clearwater*, without possibly excluding other factions of the organization. *Clearwater* was also acknowledged for being at the forefront of uncovering and publishing information regarding PCBs disposed by General Electric:

As an environmental action group the Hudson River Sloop Restoration has established its credentials through such innovative programs as the *Clearwater* Pipewatch which monitors industrial and municipal pollution. One such pollutant, the toxic chemical polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB), is being dumped into the Hudson by the General Electric Company and has forced a state ban on commercial fishing in the river except for Shad and Sturgeon. Information uncovered by *Clearwater* on PCB contamination was later published in the *New York Times*, *Environmental Action*, *Audubon Magazine* and *Sports Illustrated*.⁹⁰

Whereas the PCB case goes unmentioned in the Kingston articles, it was presented as one of the main focuses in this article. This is strange because *Clearwater*’s battle for PCB cleanup is usually one of the most celebrated projects undertaken by the boat in secondary sources. Although its contribution is often overstated, the PCB events usually

⁹⁰ “‘Mayday’ from the *Clearwater*: Earlier Repair Estimates Have Doubled,” *The Sunday Freeman*, April 4, 1976.

have provided the platform that often propels the *Clearwater* into notoriety. For example, John Cronin stated that he and another Clearwater staff member had traveled to Washington D.C. right before the PCB story broke and file a Freedom of Information request form for other studies done on the river, which include information about PCBs, yet this information was not vital to the eventual case.⁹¹ This praise for the *Clearwater* was not limited. In “Seeger to Mix Wine and Clear Water,” a description of a fundraising concert that is to be held for the rotting sloop, to be headlined by Seeger. Here the Clearwater organization was again recognized for its tactics:

The group’s actions have resulted in forcing many industries to stop discharging waste into the Hudson, and it was among the leaders in warning of the environmental perils of PCB.⁹²

In both these cases rather bold claims were stated, however concrete examples of how the *Clearwater* directly affected corporate policy was not explored.

The sentiment of the *Clearwater* being an end, rather than simply a means to encourage civilian pollution abatement was even held by Seeger himself by 1978. Seeger wrote: “If the Hudson River is somewhat cleaner today than 10 years ago, part of the reason is a big sailing ship patterned after the cargo sloops that were the workhorses of the river in the mid-19th century.” After explaining the operations of the *Clearwater*, Seeger mentioned a lyric from one of his songs: “The river may be dirty now, but she’s getting cleaner every day,” and continued to reassure the reader that a cleaner future was in fact the reality for the river. However, he does not fail to mention that there were still pollution hurdles, such as the PCB dilemma. He wrote about GE’s PCB dumping:

⁹¹ Cronin, 2011.

⁹² Fred Ferretti, “Seeger to Mix Wine and Clear Water,” *New York Times*, August 13, 1976.

Thanks to a few courageous scientists and newspaper reporters and a courageous New York State environmental commissioner (no longer commissioner), the story became public in August of '75. The Clearwater and other organizations set up a hue and cry. In 1976 Washington passed a Toxic Substances Control Act, which is phasing out the use of PCB nationally.

Unsurprisingly, Seeger presented these events as if the legislation of 1976 was directly related to Clearwater's complaints, rather than just the scientific research alone. He later began to conclude the article:

So is Clearwater a hope or a hoax? The writer of these lines was one of the first to help build the boat, has been a longtime supporter of the project, and so must confess to being prejudiced and not to be trusted. But I think there is as much hope for the Hudson as there is for the human race. Probably more hope.⁹³

After writing an entire article about Clearwater, it's obvious that all Seeger's hope was derived from the belief that Clearwater was a saving grace for the Hudson, not necessarily concrete evidence.

In contrast to the early writings on the *Clearwater*, the later primary and all the secondary sources view the *Clearwater* through a romanticized lens. One great example of this was "*Clearwater* clear water," found in the boating magazine *Tall Ships* in July of 1976. The writing was fairly consistent with the way in which the *Clearwater* began to be viewed by the late seventies. Following the usual introduction, the author states that as all the sailing boat that once graced the river disappeared, "the river's clear water has vanished too." However as the article tells the story, the *Clearwater* stood alone and strong to fight the pollution battle. When the *Clearwater* was still an idea, "volunteers came forth, sloop clubs began to form up and down the river bank, and the fight began—to build the sloop and stop the destruction of the river." Mason ends the article:

Rejoice at the sight of the *Clearwater* for she is *our* dream—and the Hudson river is *every* river...*Clearwater*. Not an antique, not a yacht—a working work boat

⁹³ Pete Seeger, "Why We Must Save the Hudson," *Parade: The Sunday News Press*, November 26, 1978.

from out of the past, sailing today to help save tomorrow.⁹⁴

Here the author, like many others at this point and in the future, believed that simply building the sloop fought pollution; the ship was an end, not simply a means.

In reaction to Seeger's, and others, celebration of the *Clearwater* the sloop began to become a national story. In March of 1979, another article was written, by Jules Loh, in the *Merced Sun-Star* of California about the marvelous *Clearwater* Sloop. Although this article was very typical of write-ups that had been done in the New York region, this article demonstrates how long it took for the *Clearwater* to become of significant in the media outside the region of its inhabitants. The article gave credit to Seeger and Vic Schwartz for developing the idea to build the sloop. Loh wrote: "they felt that if they could rekindle a love of the river, the people along its banks would do the rest." She mentioned that schoolchildren come aboard, hinting at the educational programs established, but makes no other remark regarding the operations of the organization.

Marty Gallanter, a *Clearwater* spokesman, stated:

The river is cleaner, decidedly cleaner... Since the *Clearwater* was launched action to clean up the river has snowballed. The sloop can't take credit for the avalanche, but maybe the first snowball.⁹⁵

All in all, there are general trends in how Pete Seeger and the Hudson River Sloop *Clearwater* are perceived. The *Clearwater* was without a doubt recognized as Pete Seeger's brainchild and, unfortunately for others involved with *Clearwater* Seeger will be the first name that comes to mind when considering *Clearwater*. The primary text both captures Seeger's role, in addition to providing an authentic and personal reaction to the *Clearwater*. At first, the sloop was simply a regional historical monument. As time

⁹⁴ Charles Mason, "Clearwater clear water," *Tall Ships*, July, 1976.

⁹⁵ Jules Loh, "Hudson Sloop Is a Beauty," *Merced Sun-Star*, March, 1, 1979.

progressed, the perseverance of the Clearwater organization allowed for the ship to be seen as an environmental protest icon, although it quickly withdrew from this position to a more educational purpose. Meanwhile, others viewed the ship as a reason for hope in all facets of life. Evidence found in these primary sources, as well as others, illustrated that the ship at first was simply a means to bring people to the river, but then quickly began taking on a life of its own. Yes, the *Clearwater* was a major player in the Hudson River cleanup and brought many people to the riverside, but the river's health had become such a serious matter that many of the issues would have been dealt with eventually. Although significant, the Clearwater's effect is overstated. The primary stories fail to tell the whole story, while also likely excluding the involvement of other organizations. Regardless, Clearwater tells an important story in the development of activism along the river. Much like Scenic Hudson, Clearwater was forced to shift its mission and ideals as time progressed. With the Storm King case, Scenic Hudson set the precedent for what could be accomplished by Clearwater, in addition to lending the means for which to reach these goals.

The Enforcer of the Hudson: Riverkeeper

Following the passage of the Clean Water Act in 1972, many people, including the Clearwater organization, felt that the process of finding and penalizing polluters along the Hudson would be sufficiently enforced by the Department of Environmental Conservation, or the Environmental Protection Agency. This trust in the newly implemented legislation was reassuring enough so that Clearwater stopped conducting pollution investigations via the People's Pipewatch. However, Bob Boyle once again found himself in the public eye as a keystone participant in the cleanup of the Hudson River. By the late 1970s Boyle felt that the NYSDEC and the EPA were failing to persecute polluters with the rigor needed. Bob Boyle had created the Hudson River Fishermen's Association in 1966 in order to combat the proposed Con Edison Storm King, plant, because fishermen felt the hydroelectric plant would manage to cause great detriment to the fisheries of the Hudson River. Now, in order to address this lack action against pollution, Boyle resurrected the Riverkeeper, which had initially been established in 1972, but had halted when the first Riverkeeper left the position. The title of Riverkeeper was given to a person who was paid by the Hudson River Fishermen's Association to travel the river and find and prosecute polluters. In 1983, John Cronin, once staff member of Clearwater and commercial fisherman was chosen by Bob Boyle to take on the position.

The day that the 25-foot *Riverkeeper* was placed in the Hudson River for the first time, very little attention was being paid to the organization. "Safeguarding the Hudson," recalls:

A small band of fisherman and river enthusiasts was on hand today when a 25-foot boat was ceremoniously lowered into the Hudson River to mark the

beginning of a new project to help keep the river free of pollution and serve as a floating research station.

The article states that the \$25,000 boat was built with funds raised by the Hudson River Fishermen's Association, and that Robert Boyle led the ceremonies. John Cronin is then mentioned as being appointed the captain of the boat by the HRFA. The boat was to be used by Cronin daily to travel up and down the river, spanning from Albany to New York City, in order to spot polluters, study the use of the river by humans, and to conduct education trips.⁹⁶ The tone of this article made it clear that it appeared that the Riverkeeper initially failed to gain the attention that the *Clearwater* received upon its christening.

Cronin explained:

The concept of riverkeeping requires a much broader view of the river. We work with the river users... We're interested in communities making good use of their riverfronts. We're interested in commerce, navigation, pollution, docks and birds. On top of that, we also do some hard-nosed investigative work on environmental or toxic problems.⁹⁷

The article continued to give the foundational history of Riverkeeper. The Hudson River Fishermen's Association was first founded in 1966 as a group of fishermen "battling pollution and fish kills along the river." The idea of having a Riverkeeper was later suggested by Bob Boyle in 1969, in his book *The Hudson River: A Natural and Unnatural History*. Although given credit for coming up with the idea of a Hudson Riverkeeper, based off a similar position that had been prominent in Britain, here Boyle is noted as the President of HRFA, not directly being involved with Riverkeeper. It was mentioned that in 1973 Tom Whyatt became the first Riverkeeper, although he eventually

⁹⁶ "Safeguarding the Hudson," *New York Times*, May 15, 1983.

⁹⁷ Suzanne DeChillo, "A Watchdog the Hudson," *New York Times*, Sep 9, 1984.

had to stop because of the extremely little monetary compensation for his services.

Later in 1980, the Fishermen's Association recovered \$25,000 in legal fees, because multiple environmental groups had signed an agreement with the Hudson River utilities on the question of the impact of power plants on the river's aquatic life. With this new source of funding, the Fishermen's Association decided to revive the Riverkeeper. Due to Cronin's background at the Clearwater's People's Pipewatch and as a commercial fisherman, Cronin was made the second Riverkeeper. Whereas Wyatt drove an old Volkswagen bus, a new boat could be built for Cronin's use.⁹⁸

Soon after, the Riverkeeper found itself very much so the in the spotlight only months after its resurrection. By the end of November of 1983 Exxon Corporation's actions had propelled Riverkeeper to be hailed as a vital resource for protecting the ecology of the Hudson River. Riverkeeper charged Exxon with "dumping polluted salt water into the Hudson and then collecting fresh water in its oil tankers for use in its Aruba refinery and to sell to the Caribbean islands' government." Exxon suggested that sixty tankers had made the trip carry stolen fresh water from Hudson the trip to the Caribbean, twenty of which had made the trip only for the water itself. Exxon estimated that 360 million gallons of water had been transported to Aruba in 1983, meanwhile "Cronin and his group" claimed that Exxon had been taking between 500 million to 1 billion gallons that year. Exxon confirmed that they received \$3 million from the Aruba government between June and September for the water that year, although Exxon contended that only the transportation costs were covered with these fees.⁹⁹ Soon after Cronin's appointment he began investigating Exxon. Cronin suggested that over three

⁹⁸ Randolph Picht, "Exxon Blamed for Piracy of Hudson River Water," *Bangor Daily News*, Bangor, Maine, November 28, 1983.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

years Exxon made 117 tanker trips and removed 700 million gallons of water from the Hudson River. The tankers also discharged their saltwater, which contained petroleum products, as found by testing conducted by Cronin at the side of the tankers.¹⁰⁰

Regardless if Exxon received profit for the sale of Hudson River's water, many others, not just Riverkeeper, began infuriated by this reality. New York State Assemblyman Maurice Hinchey, who was also the chairman of the NYS legislative Committee on Environmental Conservation, suggested that the water in the Hudson River belonged to the State of New York, and that Exxon had no right to take it without permission or compensation. This issue was also to be reviewed by Hinchey, and a New York congressman, the U.S. Attorney's office the state Attorney General and the NYS Department of Environmental. The DEC stated that Exxon had been operating without two necessary permits – to discharge salt water, and to take the fresh water. Additionally, Riverkeeper had previously informed Exxon that they planned to file a lawsuit against the corporation, on the charge that they had violated the federal Clean Water Act due to the salt water dumping.¹⁰¹

This article illustrated an interesting transition for Riverkeeper. Whereas the initial article covering the Riverkeeper did not explain why Boyle felt the need to patrol the river, this article demonstrated that the constant supervision of the river by Riverkeeper was necessary. Riverkeeper had filed complaints against Exxon almost a month before the DEC had become aware of the issue. This discrepancy magnifies that perhaps state and federal agencies could not be held responsible to find and prosecute all the polluters along the Hudson. Another matter that is noteworthy about this article was

¹⁰⁰ Picht.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

Cronin's participation. Previously Bob Boyle was leader of the organization, and Cronin was just a side note. All attention given to Riverkeeper was through Cronin. Here, Cronin had become the face of Riverkeeper; meanwhile Boyle is not even mentioned in the article.

For a few years following, Riverkeeper received large cover stories because of the feat of the Exxon case. One of the articles is "A Watchdog the Hudson," by Suzanne DeChillo from September 9, 1984, in the *New York Times*. The article began by stating that Cronin is a "watchdog for about 150 miles of the Hudson," and is often referred to as a "Boy Scout with binoculars." One major project that the HRFA had been working on the months before the article was an investigation of complaints that Metro-North had been burying its old railroad ties in holes that fill up with tidal water. Considering Metro North was the single largest owner of shoreline of the Hudson River Valley, Cronin felt that they took terrible care of the shoreline. In reaction, Riverkeeper had filed a 60-day notice of intent to sue Metro-North for what Cronin considered illegal disposal of hazardous waste. In April of 1984, Exxon Corp. agreed to pay \$500,000 to the HRFA and the Open Space Institute of New York, and Exxon later paid NYS 1.5 million dollars in a settlement six weeks later. Cronin clarified that Riverkeeper and the state negotiated separately because Riverkeeper wanted to make sure that recovered money went directly to improving the river, not simply to a general state fund. \$250,000 was put aside as funding for specific projects or grants to benefit river users. The remaining money was given to Riverkeeper/HRFA for their work. All this money was to be managed by the Open Space Institute, which was a nonprofit environmental organization selected by both parties, though the Fishermen's Association made the recommendations for the grants.

The article goes on to address whether the “Riverkeeper is doing the government’s job.” One DEC director stated that he was very happy with Riverkeeper, because the state “wouldn’t have had a case if it hadn’t been for the riverkeeper” in referring to the Exxon lawsuit. He continued to say that:

The riverkeeper is fulfilling a role on the Hudson that can only be filled someone who devotes full time to the river. It’s the best way to see problems of the river. I would like to have a position like that in this agency as an enforcement effort.

This sentiment by the DEC employee reinforces Boyle’s initial concerns for reviving the Riverkeeper position. Obviously, the State did not feel that constant observation of the river was within the realm of possibility yet also stated that a situation such as the Exxon case would have not been addressed without Riverkeeper’s help. This sentiment validates Boyle’s concern that the State was not doing a sufficient job of protecting the river. In this article, Boyle believed that the riverkeeper was not a job for the government, because “You can’t trust government to do the job.” He emphasized that the DEC was not independent of the Governor, and therefore he felt that special interest might have been accommodated if the riverkeeper was in the State’s control. Boyle continued to say that he wished to have the entire river patrolled by naturalists “from the highest tributary in the Adirondacks right down to the harbor.”¹⁰² Boyle’s response at this point illustrates that he had no trust in either businesses or the government, making the Riverkeeper all the more a necessity.

The increased efforts were not obviously appreciated by all. In “A River Watchdog is Turning 20,” little attention was brought to the actual twentieth anniversary of the Fishermen’s Association, but rather to the recent case that occurred in Newburgh,

¹⁰² Ibid.

which met considerable resistance. In late 1985, John Cronin and others walked the Quassaick Creek in Newburgh at 1 o'clock in the morning searching for illegal pollution of the stream. With collected evidence, the Fishermen's Association and the NYS DEC jointly began enforcing action against the towns of Newburgh and New Windsor, and nine businesses along the creek. The author notes that the HRFA has infuriated some of its targets; one town official has accused the Fishermen's Association of "extortion and obstructing his town's cleanup efforts." Both Cronin and Boyle expressed that the federal water-pollution laws allowed citizens and groups to sue anyone who goes "against the laws of the land." The author notes that the Federal Refuse Act of 1899, and the New York Harbor Act of 1888, and notices by civilians allowed the Association to go after industry polluting the river, resulting in the Association filing complaints to the U.S.'s Attorney's office. The Town of Newburgh was charged by the state with improper disposal of alum sludge from a water treatment plant and with utilizing an illegal discharge pipe at a sewage treatment plant. These charges could have resulted in \$3 million of fines for the town of Newburgh, for the violation of the Clean Water Act. These charges led Newburgh officials to ask the State Inspector General to investigate if the Fishermen's Association had unjustifiable influence on the DEC. Newburgh's town Supervisor, Robert Kirkpatrick, suggested the Fishermen's Association methods were comparable to extortion, and that the Association hoped for an out of court settlement, because HRFA was driven by money and not the actual protection of the River. Boyle denied these suggestions. He stated: "We're not in it for the money. We're self-appointed do-gooders."¹⁰³

¹⁰³ "A River Watchdog Is Turning 20," *New York Times*, Apr 6, 1986.

This article failed to develop a distinctive tone; it presented both the good with the bad of the Hudson River Fishermen's Association. It noted both the great accomplishments of the organization, such as the charge of Exxon, yet lets some of the negative points of the organization be presented. For instance, by ending on the Boyle quote claiming that they are "self-appointed do-gooders," it seemed to present the Association as a little self-righteous. How could a group of 250 fishermen precisely know that a pristine Hudson River is in fact the best utilization for the entire pollution of the Valley? Obviously, a pure and healthy river is in the best interest of fishermen, however the backlash demonstrated by the Newburgh Town Supervisor illustrated that the HRFA may have been asking for too much too soon. In terms of the alum sludge, the town Supervisor suggested that the town was in the process of cleaning up the sludge. Consequently, it may in fact have seemed unconscionable to fine a town a massive sum of money for an issue that they were in the process of addressing. After almost 25 years of environmental activism occurring in the Hudson River Valley, some, especially those prosecuted, felt that stringent pollution control was unwarranted. The sentiments of the town Supervisor drew a parallel to the environmental backlash that occurred during the 1980s, made prominent by the Reagan Administration.

In the face of Riverkeeper's major successes, disapproval of the Riverkeeper's tactics was prominent. In late June of 1990, Marlene Aig, wrote an article focusing primarily on Cronin, which was published in multiple newspapers. *The Daily Union* version, of Junction City, Kansas, first presented an overview of the Riverkeeper, and how Cronin came to be involved in the organization. Consistent with previous stories, Cronin is adamant about protecting the Hudson River from industry or careless pollution

done by towns, because the Hudson is the public's river and is "supposed to be ours." Aig observed that the Fishermen's Association's played a part in halting both a highway project on the West Side of NYC, and the proposed Storm King power plant before Cronin had arrived at the organization. Here, Boyle praises Cronin for his efforts. Boyle stated: "He wiped the floor with Exxon. The federal government couldn't do it, but he did." Aig continues, that Con Edison altered the operation of two of nuclear power plants at Indian Point to prevent the sucking up of fish. She finished Cronin's list of accolades by stating that Cronin had brought six suits against the town of Newburgh for its illegal discharges. Once again, the now former, Supervisor of Newburgh, Robert Kirkpatrick, was on hand to express his disgruntlement. Aig wrote that Kirkpatrick felt that Cronin wasn't "acting for the river, but for himself." Kirkpatrick stated: "I envision John Cronin saying, 'Lord, step aside. The Hudson River is mine. You can have the rest of the world.' He sees himself as the infinite being of the Hudson River." Kirkpatrick claimed that Cronin's aim was "to gain publicity and to raise money to fund the fisherman's association through settlements. His targets actually are friends of the river."¹⁰⁴ Once again the parties being benefited from Riverkeeper's work came to be questioned. This concern is legitimate, because the money from the suits went directly to fund Riverkeeper, and continues to go unanswered in this article.

Later in 1990, an article was published as a notice of the 4th Annual Hudson Riverkeeper fund-raising auction. It is stated that the Riverkeeper works to protect the natural resources and tributaries of the Hudson. Cronin's investigative work, along with the staff's attorney, Robert F. Kennedy Jr., resulted in court cases against more than 40 polluters. The article also credits Riverkeeper for inspiring similar programs in Long

¹⁰⁴ Marlene Aig, "Modern Riverkeeper Keeps Would-be Polluters at Bay," *The Daily Union*, June 28, 1990.

Island Sound, San Francisco Bay, and the Delaware River. The article continued to paraphrase Boyle in saying that the Hudson River Fishermen's Association now has an annual budget of \$400,000.¹⁰⁵ This number is shocking when considering the history of the Fishermen's Association. In 1983, the \$25,000 received due to environmental settlements was considered a great boost to the funding of the HRFA, allowing Boyle to resurrect the Riverkeeper position. However, just seven years later the Association's budget had grown to be about 15 times what it was before the Riverkeeper project. Regardless, the HRFA still felt that growth of the organization was warranted, enough so that for the past four years they had been requested donations from the general public. This exercise subtly questions the intentions of the Fishermen's Association. In the case of donations, the public could give money to the HRFA in hope that the Hudson River would become cleaner. However, with the budget at \$400,000 one may have considered how much their help was actually needed. Public monies would have aided the Association's operations to grow. If all went well the Association would have been able to find and persecute more polluters. Their suits would have then resulted in a cleaner River, due to the halting of pollution. However, all money collected by the Association that didn't get diverted to cover costs, would then go to profit for the HRFA. At this point with all the successes of the Fishermen's Association, it seemed inappropriate for the Association to ask the public to help pay the salaries of an organization that may have been growing beyond practical purposes. However, the article records Boyle's estimation of the annual budget very nonchalantly. Here, both Boyle and the author should have paid more attention to the details of the budget. Why was \$400,000 now needed, when an

¹⁰⁵ Nelson Bryant, "Hudson Riverkeeper Seeks Funds," *New York Times*, Oct 12, 1990.

almost negligible budget was capable of suing one of the largest multinational corporations in the world just seven years prior?

Years later the Riverkeeper still seemed to be viewed as an important patroller of the Hudson. However, as time passed Riverkeeper was pursuing less notable cases, which may have inhibited them from remaining in the public's eye. Regardless, Cronin and company were still noted as experts on the topic of the Hudson. However, the 1994 article, "In 25-Year Fight, the Hudson Starts to Mend," by Elsa Brenner, lays out the progress achieved in restoring the quality of the Hudson and notes Riverkeeper's current undertakings. Cronin was quickly quoted, as saying that the reduced pollution and "generally healthier fish populations" are notable proof that the River had been beginning to recover. Brenner describes Cronin as "the riverkeeper for the 4,000-member environmental organization." At that time, Cronin was concerned with the 40 acres of Hastings-on-Hudson that had been polluted by the Anaconda Company, with PCBs among other chemicals. The Village of Hastings and Riverkeeper drafted a lawsuit against Harbor at Hastings Associates, Atlantic Richfield Company and Mobil Oil Corp., and Chevron Chemical Corp. Following an overview of PCBs and addressing other pollution issues, Brenner returns her attention to Cronin. Cronin is quoted:

One of our biggest obstacles is government. The Hudson River has been a bellwether of what's going to happen environmentally in the country in terms of environmental law, hazardous waste cleanup, fish and habitat protection and the type of activism that takes place.¹⁰⁶

This quote expresses pride that Cronin feels in relation to the Hudson River; he believed the Hudson to be a trailblazer in the realm of environmentalism, and therefore likely

¹⁰⁶ Elsa Brenner, "In 25-Year Fight, the Hudson Starts to Mend," *New York Times*, Oct 9, 1994.

believed his work to be admirable.

Overall this article was revealing of the Fishermen's Association. Now that Riverkeeper had persecuted many of the active polluters, the issue of abandoned pollution sites was becoming the primary issue. In the case of the Village of Hastings site, where the site has exchanged ownership multiple times, blame becomes difficult to assign. The option taken by the Riverkeeper was to sue all the owners, which is not exactly the less subtle way to address the issue, especially when dealing with large corporations. However, the amount of funds and the size that the HRFA had come to suggest that there were enough resources for these controversial situations. The fact that the Hudson River Fisherman's Association had grown from its initial 250-300 fishermen members into a full-fledged environmental group with 4,000 members in 10 years is remarkable. While the mission of Riverkeeper was comparable to those of the Hudson River Sloop Club and Scenic Hudson, the means of operation were drastically different. Riverkeeper proved to be the "bulldog of the trio," by taking the most active means to halt the deterioration of the river.¹⁰⁷ Whereas the Storm King case and Clearwater set precedent for the future of environmentalism, and ecological education, Riverkeeper was much more so concerned with concrete results. Collectively these three organizations allowed people, such as Cronin, to contend that the Hudson River was the "birthplace of the modern environmental movement."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Robert Worth, "Groups That Defend the Hudson," *New York Times* November 5, 2000.

¹⁰⁸ Brenner, 1994.

Conclusion

The history of the Hudson River as presented by studying these three environmental organizations is essential for understanding the river. Moreover, the case study of the Hudson vividly illustrates how the environmental movement evolved. The case of the Storm King and the *Clearwater* perfectly displays how environmentalism developed in its most significant period. Initially the preservation concerns of Scenic Hudson were undermined simply as a joke by older conservationists who emphasized economic development. Much like the Hudson River School artists who longed preceded them, preservationists seemed to romanticize the wilderness of the Hudson Highlands, and wished to keep the wilderness as something separate from urban daily life. However, as the case developed and more opposition resulted in more research and a greater understanding of the river, more legitimate, scientifically based, ecological concerns began to arise. Whereas the original scenic concerns of Scenic Hudson were disregarded, the new concerns about fish health and economic viability of the plant became undeniable. The Storm King case represents the definitive shift in public concern from conservation environmentalism. As leading conservationists, such as Laurance Rockefeller, began to realize that the Storm King case was not at all a reasonable means of conservation the tables quickly turned. With mounting opposition and hard scientific evidence, Con Edison now appeared to be problem, rather than the pesky “bird-watchers” who first opposed the project. Additionally, Con Edison’s use of flawed research in order to remain unresponsive to public concerns furthered the public’s distrust in the industry. This all resulted in the “preservation” of Storm King Mountain, for better or for worse.

Since Clearwater formed in the middle of the Storm King case, it was also

subjected to change dramatically. In the beginning, Clearwater simply wanted to bring people to the river's edge in order to get residents to once again fall in love with the river. However, with the advent of Earth Day in 1970 and the new emphasis on tangible pollution control, Clearwater was forced to alter its objectives. Soon thereafter Clearwater developed People's Pipewatch in order to conduct research on river pollution, in addition to increased public pressure on the polluting businesses themselves. With the advent of the Clean Water Act Clearwater began to recede from this role, believing that state and federal government would burden this responsible in addition to realizing that the pollution testing may have been over-reaching the goals of the organization. Later in the decade, Clearwater began to solidify itself as an ecology education tool, and continues to accept this position to this day. Following the rescinding of the People's Pipewatch and insufficient testing by governmental organizations, Riverkeeper emerged in order to address the issue of pollution. For years Riverkeeper forcefully and diligently pursued polluters, upsetting many people in the process. In result, businesses began to alter their pollution activities in order to avoid a possible Riverkeeper suit. Although effective in many senses, the tactics and unrelenting attitude of Riverkeeper produced a backlash to environmental protection that was comparable to that expressed by much of the national public following the increase environmental awareness of the 1970s.

Besides being a magnificent historical monument, the Hudson River is the perfect case study for illustrating the transitional phases of environmentalism in the 20th century. Initially the prominence of economically focused conservationists was prominent. However, following World War II the emergence of preservationists brought to light that the older form of conservation was no longer acceptable for the public in a new era.

Almost immediately after this realization, the scenic concerns of preservationists were devalued as more research focusing on the ecology of natural resources began to formulate. Now that it was realized that these natural amenities were much more than what met the eye, the need and desire for education emerged to become supremely significant. Following this educational phase, it became essential that either private or public organizations begin to protect these open source resources. Studying these transitions both gives perspective on the history of environmentalism, in addition to provided ideas for the development of new means of environmental protection to address the tribulations that society will subsequently face in the near future.