

BY: M. of A. Levenberg

COMMEMORATING the 60th Anniversary of Riverkeeper and honoring its enduring legacy of environmental advocacy, stewardship, and protection of the Hudson River and New York's drinking water resources

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to recognize and honor those distinguished organizations whose commitment to environmental protection and public service has profoundly benefited the people and natural resources of the State of New York; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to commemorate the 60th Anniversary of Riverkeeper, marking six decades of steadfast advocacy, environmental leadership, and dedication to restoring and protecting the Hudson River and safeguarding clean drinking water for millions of New Yorkers; and

WHEREAS, Riverkeeper traces its origins to 1966, when Hudson River fishermen, recreational anglers, and concerned citizens united in response to the alarming pollution and environmental degradation threatening the Hudson River, America's "First River"; and

WHEREAS, At that time, hazardous industrial waste, raw sewage discharges, oil contamination, and unchecked development had transformed vast stretches of the Hudson River into what many regarded as an industrial sewer, imperiling fish populations, wildlife habitats, drinking water supplies, and treasured recreational opportunities; and

WHEREAS, Determined to reclaim and restore the river that served as their livelihood, home, and community centerpiece, these citizens formed the Hudson River Fishermen's Association, the precursor to Riverkeeper, and began a groundbreaking environmental enforcement movement rooted in citizen action, science, and the rule of law; and

WHEREAS, During the Association's first public meeting at the American Legion Hall in Crotonville, New York, a standing-room-only crowd of rivermen, anglers, families, and environmental advocates pledged themselves to protecting the Hudson River from further abuse and exploitation; and

WHEREAS, Inspired by the discovery of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1888 and the Refuse Act of 1899 by outdoor writer and conservationist Bob Boyle, the organization initiated a historic campaign to identify, prosecute, and hold accountable polluters who were illegally contaminating the Hudson River; and

WHEREAS, Through tireless advocacy and strategic litigation, the organization successfully shut down unlawful industrial discharges, secured landmark legal victories against major polluters, and helped establish citizen enforcement as a powerful tool for environmental

protection throughout the United States; and

WHEREAS, The organization also played a vital role, alongside Scenic Hudson and other advocates, in opposing the proposed hydroelectric development at Storm King Mountain, helping to preserve critical striped bass spawning grounds and setting important precedents for environmental review and ecological protection; and

WHEREAS, Using proceeds from successful legal actions, the organization launched the original Riverkeeper patrol boat, initiating a tradition of vigilant monitoring and enforcement that continues today through Riverkeeper's patrols of the Hudson River and its tributaries; and

WHEREAS, Over the past six decades, Riverkeeper has become one of the nation's leading environmental organizations, working to protect and restore the Hudson River from source to sea and to safeguard the drinking water supplies relied upon by more than nine million New Yorkers; and

WHEREAS, Riverkeeper's mission is rooted in community partnerships, science, advocacy, and the law, and its efforts have contributed significantly to reductions in pollution, improvements in water quality, the revival of recreational boating and swimming, and heightened public awareness of environmental stewardship; and

WHEREAS, Riverkeeper continues to address ongoing environmental challenges, including sewage contamination, aging infrastructure, habitat degradation, climate change, harmful emerging pollutants, and threats posed by unsustainable development and antiquated power generation facilities; and

WHEREAS, Guided by its enduring core values, Riverkeeper affirms the importance of healthy ecosystems, clean and accessible drinking water, environmental justice, scientific integrity, public participation, and equitable access to the environmental and recreational benefits of New York's waterways; and

WHEREAS, Through citizen engagement, volunteerism, habitat restoration, sustainable energy advocacy, and educational outreach, Riverkeeper empowers communities throughout the Hudson Valley and New York City watershed to become active stewards of their rivers, streams, and drinking water resources; and

WHEREAS, Riverkeeper's vision for the future is one in which the Hudson River and its tributaries are ecologically restored, resilient, teeming with life, safe for swimming, fishing, and boating, and valued and protected by all who depend upon them; and

WHEREAS, The State of New York owes a profound debt of gratitude to the generations of advocates, fishermen, scientists, attorneys, volunteers, and community leaders whose dedication and perseverance transformed Riverkeeper into a model for grassroots environmental activism and effective public-interest advocacy; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commemorate the 60th Anniversary of Riverkeeper and to honor its extraordinary contributions to environmental protection, clean water advocacy, and the preservation of the Hudson River for present and future generations of New Yorkers; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to Riverkeeper.