



# New York Water Environment Association, Inc.

*The Water Quality Management Professionals*

525 Plum Street, Suite 102 • Syracuse, New York 13204

(315) 422-7811 • Fax: 422-3851 • [www.nywea.org](http://www.nywea.org)

**Contact:** Patricia Cerro-Reehil, NYWEA Executive Director, 315-422-7811

*October 15, 2021*

## **New York Water Environment Association Releases White Paper on Proposed Constitutional Amendment**

**Syracuse, NY** – The New York Water Environment Association (NYWEA) released a white paper today, discussing the proposed New York State Constitutional Amendment on the ballot in November. To fulfill the mission of educating its members and the general public about water resources and the water environment, NYWEA convened water leaders within the State along with knowledgeable legal professionals to explore what this proposed Amendment may mean to those on the frontline of protecting New York’s waters and the citizens that rely on these waters. NYWEA has distilled that discussion into this new publication.

The proposed Amendment would add the following to the New York State Constitution’s Article I, Bill of Rights: “Environmental rights. Each person shall have a right to clean air and water, and a healthful environment.” This Amendment has gone through the legislative process and passed in two consecutive legislative sessions. The next step is for New York State voters to vote on whether it becomes part of the State’s Bill of Rights.

NYWEA hosted two webinar-based legal panels to hear from proponents of the Amendment as well as those questioning the Amendment. The first panel featured Maya van Rossum, founder of the nonprofit Green Amendments for the Generations, and Katrina Kuh, Haub Distinguished Professor of Environmental Law at Pace University. This event was held via Zoom webinar on April 29, 2021. The second panel featured Ken Pokalsky from the Business Council of New York State, Inc., Rob Stout of Whiteman, Osterman & Hanna, and Kevin Young of Young Sommer, LLC. The second event was held via Zoom webinar on May 12, 2021.

Following the two panels, NYWEA members developed a white paper in a Question and Answer format, based on the two presentations. The white paper contains a description of the proposed amendment, a comparison of the amendment to similar constitutional amendments enacted in other states, and discusses the legal implications for the amendment, including the definition of “clean water,” “clean air,” and “right.” The document also addresses questions of how the amendment would be enforced and implemented. This new publication is intended to educate and inform NYWEA members and others who strive to protect and enhance the State’s water quality, but it is also intended to educate the public on this important item they will be asked to vote on. The decision on whether to vote for or against the proposed Amendment is up to each individual to make on their own. The white paper is now available on the NYWEA website, [www.nywea.org](http://www.nywea.org).

**About NYWEA:** Founded in 1929 by professionals in the field of water quality as a nonprofit educational organization, NYWEA has 2,500 members statewide and hosts several technical conferences each year for environmental engineers, scientists, public officials and others who work in water and wastewater quality management. In addition, NYWEA sponsors a scholarship program, publishes Clear Waters, a quarterly educational magazine, administers wastewater operator training certification, and supports humanitarian clean water projects. Headquartered in Syracuse, NYWEA has seven regional chapters, 14 college student chapters and is a Member Association of the international Water Environment Federation.

###