

WEST CANADA CREEK RIVERKEEPERS

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The West Canada Creek Riverkeepers is a citizen advocacy group focused on the Riparian rights on the West Canada Creek, a major tributary of the Mohawk River. The group that was to ultimately form the West Canada Creek Riverkeepers started meeting in the summer of 2007 with the aim of preserving and protecting the River. This first meeting occurred just before the water crisis of 2007 in which low late summer precipitation, and steady drawdown of the Hinckley Reservoir resulted in a limitation on water use. This event led to NY State Department of Health having to intervene to ensure an adequate supply of drinking water for the Utica area. During the Water crisis of 2007 the Hinckley Working Group was formed and the Riverkeepers attended every meeting and spoke during the citizens comment period. During this crisis, the group was confronted with issues related to low water and the effect of low water throughout the watershed. As a result of this event, the group started learning about riparian rights, bills in Albany, and the principal players with interests in the water. The group quickly discovered that no one was listening to the citizens and formed the West Canada Creek Riverkeepers Inc. in the autumn of 2007. Formation of the group was driven by the recognition that there was a need for citizen advocates and because it was clear that there will be more threats to the River. The aim of the group is to be advocates for the West Canada Creek, by promoting education, and ultimately being keepers of this resource. The Riverkeepers consists of landowners, sportsman, business owners, artists, scientists, and historians who are all concerned with protecting this precious resource. In January 2009, the West Canada Creek Riverkeepers intervened in the lawsuit between the Mohawk Valley Water Authority and the NY State Canal Corp. This motion was filed to protect the riparian rights of those affected by the River. This case is currently in the NY Supreme Court.



Photo of the low water in the Hinckley Reservoir in 2007. Here a boat is high and dry near the confluence of Black Creek. Photo: Rob Thrasher.