

The Saratogian
February 8, 2010

Two lakes off polluted waters list; Adirondack Council pushes to continue fight against acid rain

By PAUL POST, The Saratogian

SARATOGA SPRINGS — Two Adirondack lakes have been removed from the state's official list of polluted waters, an indication that acid rain recovery is under way.

However, a leading environmental group says more emission cuts are needed to clean up the more than 500 lakes still affected and bring about aquatic wildlife restoration.

A bill introduced this week by U.S. Sen. Thomas Carper,

D-Del., would slash sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide emissions by 80 and 50 percent, respectively, by 2018 and 2015. The Adirondack Council is calling on New York's congressional delegation to support the measure.

"We still have far to go before the Adirondack Park will fully recover from decades of acid rain," Executive Director Brian Houseal said.

Recently, the state Department of Environmental Conservation removed Cranberry Lake and Gull Pond, in St. Lawrence County, from its list of polluted waters.

Recovery varies from lake to lake based on a variety of factors. For example, precipitation is greater west of the High Peaks, so there's more pollution there. Also, some lakes have faster, larger outflows, so their water turns over more quickly than others. The size of a lake's watershed also plays a role.

At Big Moose Lake, in Herkimer County, some fish species have started making a comeback.

"But we still need cuts to make the biological recovery complete," council spokesman John Sheehan said.

Sulfur and nitrogen are acid rain's two main components. If approved, Carper's bill would reduce sulfur emissions from the nation's smokestacks by

8 million tons, from 9.5 million to 1.5 million. Nitrogen pollution would go from 3 million to 1.62 million tons.

The bill also calls for new regulations to decrease mercury emissions by at least 90 percent by 2012.

“Hundreds of lakes and ponds remain too acidic to support their native wildlife,” Houseal said. “In others, the wildlife is being steadily poisoned by mercury contamination, which is worsened by the acidic conditions in soils and waters.”

Legislation would also help clean up two other areas of New York impacted by acid rain — the Catskills and Hudson Highlands.