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## National group calls Susquehanna River 'most endangered'

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The Susquehanna River, with source waters in Otsego Lake, has been named the nation's most endangered river by American Rivers.

In an ranking of endangered rivers announced Tuesday, the organization -- which has more than 65,000 members and offices in Washington, D.C. according to its website -- called the river "a victim of natural gas drilling and the environmental hazards associated with hydraulic fracturing, also known as 'fracking.'"

Among problems it cites are "ground water pollution in Susquehanna County (Pa.) resulting in loss of a community's drinking water, a blowout in Bradford County (Pa.) that went uncontrolled, allowing toxic fracking chemicals to flow into the Susquehanna, deadly accidents at a gas well site, as well as chemical spills, explosions and fires."

Two county officials -- Scott Fickbohm, district manager of Otsego County's Soil & Water District, and his counterpart in Delaware County, Rick Weidenbach -- said Tuesday that the Susquehanna River is in pretty good shape in New York state.

"Water quality in the river in New York is improving," Weidenbach said. "As far as gas drilling goes, I think the New York state is looking at this very closely to make sure we don't have those kinds of problems here."

Fickbohm agreed with Weidenbach, saying, "The river's pretty clean when the water crosses over into Pennsylvania, but of course we don't have widespread gas drilling here."

Erik Miller, executive director of the Otsego County Conservation Association, said the report will focus attention on the river "and how important it is to our area and the Chesapeake Bay. The Susquehanna recharges our back-up aquifer in Oneonta and it's important for that reason in the Binghamton area, too."

The gas industry holds that hydrofracking is safe and makes economic sense.