

# Lesson Plan: I Speak For the River - Genesee River Advocacy

## Description

Students write a letter to a New York State Senator advocating for an amendment to the New York State constitution naming every New Yorker's right to a healthful environment.



## Essential Question

What can we do to prevent pollution through policy?

## Learning Targets

1. I can understand that laws protect water quality.
2. I can apply what I have learned to advocate for a clean Genesee River.
3. I can articulate my position with experience and evidence.

<b>Class</b> 7th-8th grade science  9-10th grade living environment	<b>Duration</b> 1 class period (45 minutes)	<b>Topics</b> Environmental Health Human Impact Genesee River
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## NGSS

Science and Engineering Practices  Constructing Explanations and Designing Solutions	Disciplinary Core Ideas  ESS3.C: Human Impacts on Earth Systems	Crosscutting Concepts  Influence of Science, Engineering, and Technology on Society and the Natural World
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## NYS Standards:

- 4.7.1e The environment may contain dangerous levels of substances (pollutants) that are harmful to organisms. Therefore, the good health of environments and individuals requires the monitoring of soil, air, and water and taking steps to keep them safe.



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## Plan for Lesson

**Notes:** A printed copy of the attached bill will need to be provided along with the lesson. A link to the online version can be provided instead.

<https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2017/S5287>

Students will need to be provided with the name and address of the New York State Senator that represents the school's district.

This website provides a search based on address:

<http://www.elections.ny.gov/district-map/district-map.html>

Students can also email their letters. Contact information can be found on the Senator's website.

### Do Now:

Students will read the text of the bill to find key elements of the text. The most important element is the desire to include, "**ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS. EACH PERSON SHALL HAVE A RIGHT TO CLEAN AIR AND WATER, AND A HEALTHFUL ENVIRONMENT.**", in the New York State Constitution.

### Letter Writing:

Students will use the provided note taking template to organize their thoughts. This can be done individually or with guidance as a class. Once students have taken notes they can draft their full letter to their State Senator. Students and teachers can use the attached rubric to assess the quality of letters before they are sent.



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Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Student Worksheet

Genesee River Advocacy Lesson Plan

# I Speak For the River: Genesee River Advocacy

## Learning Targets

1. I can understand that laws protect water quality.
2. I can apply what I have learned to advocate for a clean Genesee River.
3. I can articulate my position with experience and evidence.
4. I can write a letter to legislators advocating for laws that protect water quality.



**Do Now: Read the attached text. What key elements of the text do you notice?**

**Notice:**

**Question:** Should the New York State Constitution include “**A RIGHT TO CLEAN AIR AND WATER, AND A HEALTHFUL ENVIRONMENT**”?

**Goal:** Write a letter to your New York State Senator that articulates an opinion related to the inclusion of every person’s right to clean air and water, and a healthful environment in the New York State Constitution using what you have learned about the health of the Genesee River as the basis of your argument.



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Follow this format for writing your letter:

(your address)  
(the date)

The Honorable (your representative)  
(The representative's address)

Dear Senator (last name):

Section	Notes
An Introduction	
-identify yourself -identify the issue -state your position	
The Body	
-background information -reasons to be concerned	
-three pieces of supporting evidence or facts	
A Conclusion	
-suggested course of action -express reason this is important to you -request follow up	



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STATE OF NEW YORK

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5287 2017-2018 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

March 20, 2017

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Introduced by Sen. CARLUCCI -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Judiciary CONCURRENT RESOLUTION OF THE SENATE AND ASSEMBLY proposing an amendment to article 1 of the constitution, in relation to the right to clean air and water and a healthful environment 1 Section

1. Resolved (if the Assembly concur), That article 1 of the  
2 constitution be amended by adding a new section 19 to read as follows:

3 S 19. **ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS. EACH PERSON SHALL HAVE A RIGHT TO CLEAN  
4 AIR AND WATER, AND A HEALTHFUL ENVIRONMENT.**

5 S 2. Resolved (if the Assembly concur), That the foregoing amendment

6 be referred to the first regular legislative session convening after the

7 next succeeding general election of members of the assembly, and, in

8 conformity with section 1 of article 19 of the constitution, be

9 published for 3 months previous to the time of such election. EXPLANATION--Matter in

ITALICS (underscored) is new; matter in brackets [ ] is old law to be omitted. LBD89102-01-7



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## Rubric for Advocacy Letter

Rubric Categories	F	D	C	B	A
<b>Introduction</b>	You have not really tried to make an introduction at all.	You have not explained who you are or the reason you are writing	It is not clear who you are but the problem you are addressing is clear.	Your letter gives some idea of who you are and the problem you are trying to address is clear.	Your letter explains who you are and why you are writing. - The problem you are addressing is clear
<b>Position / Claim</b>	There is no real attempt to make your position known or align it to a problem / question	You have not made your position clear	You have made a clear position / claim but it does not align with your problem.	You have made a clear position but it is only loosely aligned with the identified problem.	Your position is clear. You have stated what you think the solution to the problem is.
<b>Evidence</b>	It is difficult to understand	You have provided less than three pieces of evidence with little quality.	You have provided less than three pieces of evidence.	You have provided three pieces of evidence but have not included any qualitative or quantitative specifics	You have provided at least three pieces of qualitative / quantitative evidence to back-up your claim / position
<b>Reasoning</b>	You have not provided any reasons.	You have tried to provide reasons but they are not linked to your claim or evidence.	You have expressed reasons your claim is true but they are not linked to evidence	You have provided reasons that back-up your claim but they are loosely linked to evidence.	You have provided relevant reasons why your claim is supported by the evidence you have supplied.



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