



Monday, December 1, 2003

## 'Navigator' can aid river plans

It shows how cumbersome government has become, that a Hudson River "navigator" is needed to help steer good projects through the state and federal bureaucracies. Still, Vincent Tamagna is a good choice to fill the position.

Recently appointed by Gov. George Pataki, Tamagna knows his way through the convoluted nature of politics -- he's a state legislator from Philipstown, Putnam County. He's also made a name for himself as founder and president of the Lower Hudson-Long Island Resource Conservation and Development Council. This organization has fostered protection of natural resources while welcoming appropriate development in this region.

Ironically, the navigator program nearly became a victim of government bureaucracy itself.

Created in 1997, the American Heritage Rivers Initiative has 14 designated rivers, including the Hudson, each with its own navigator. The U.S. Department of Agriculture tried to cut funding for the program a couple years ago, but U.S. Reps. Maurice Hinchey, D-Hurley, and Sue Kelly, R-Katonah, fought to restore the budget.

The Hudson River has already benefited from having a navigator. Tamagna's predecessor, J. Eric Scherer, strongly supported efforts to restore historic lighthouses along the Hudson, and helped win long-delayed federal permits for ferry service in Beacon.

The navigator program is based at Marist College in Poughkeepsie, through its Hudson River Valley Institute, which helps educate the public about the cultural and historic heritage of this region. Tamagna is contracted to receive \$69,000 this year, which includes travel and expenses.

If Tamagna succeeds in bringing more government attention to the Hudson -- especially at a time when it is beginning to recover from years of neglect and pollution -- then efforts to fund the navigator position will have been worth it.

### On the Web

- The American Heritage Rivers Initiative: [www.epa.gov/rivers/](http://www.epa.gov/rivers/)
- Hudson River Valley Institute: [www.hudsonrivervalley.net](http://www.hudsonrivervalley.net)