



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

John W. Mannion

Senator Mannion and Assemblyman Stirpe Introduce Legislation to Mitigate Persistent Flooding in Upstate Communities

JOHN W. MANNION August 7, 2023

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Legislation adopts recommendations from the recent report issued by the Upstate Flood Mitigation Task Force

Mannion and Stirpe call for complete mapping of the Oswego River Watershed using HEC-RAS, the technique endorsed by the Task Force and used by the Army Corps of Engineers

Lawmakers propose the creation of a centralized Oswego River Basin Authority to better manage waterflow and discharges

SYRACUSE, NY – Senator John W. Mannion and Assemblyman Al Stirpe today announced new legislation to mitigate persistent flooding in Central New York and Mohawk Valley communities, including in Cross Lake and along the Seneca River.

The legislation adopts recommendations from the recent [report](#) issued by the Upstate Flood Mitigation Task Force, a panel of hydrologists, emergency management experts, and other stakeholders whose work was enabled by earlier legislation sponsored by Mannion and Stirpe and signed by the governor.

Mannion and Stirpe are calling for a complete mapping of the Oswego River Watershed using the Hydrologic Engineering Center River Analysis System (HEC-RAS,) which is the technique and methodology endorsed by the Task Force and what's used by the Army Corps of Engineers. They are also proposing the creation of a centralized Oswego River Basin Authority to improve water and discharge management.

Senator John W. Mannion said, “Big problems like persistent flooding in Upstate communities require big solutions. Creating an authority will centralize water and discharge management across the five thousand square mile Oswego River Watershed. Deploying advanced mapping and modeling technologies will give us a new understanding of the watershed and that knowledge can be applied to flood mitigation, environmental conversation, agriculture, and recreational uses. This has been the strategy from the start – activate the dormant Upstate Flood Mitigation Task Force, fill it with experts, study the problem and issue recommendations. Now we move ahead in a new phase, and I look forward to working with Assemblyman Stirpe and other stakeholders to advance these well-researched and well-thought-out proposals into formal action and state policy.”

Assemblymember Stirpe said, ““For local neighborhoods across our region, flash flooding from the Mohawk River and extreme weather events are not an abstract problem, it's an

undeniable reality that impacts our daily life. Climate change is altering our environment and damaging our communities' infrastructure. Thanks to the concerted and laser-focused leadership of the Flood Mitigation Task Force's Chair Brian Stratton and the task force's diligent efforts, the year-long initial report provides reasonable water management recommendations that we must act on. Energy, land use and infrastructure decisions we take now, like our legislation, will help fortify our long-term mitigation response."

Dan Rehkugler, President of Central New York Waterways Association said, "The members of CNY Waterways and our families have protected and loved Central New York waterways for our entire lives. We fully endorse the steps proposed by Senator Mannion and Assemblyman Stirpe because in our experience we do not have enough data and too many people have suffered from the lack of an effective flood mitigation strategy. Senator Mannion and Assemblyman Stirpe listened to our concerns, welcomed us into the process, and are now taking meaningful actions that we support."

The Oswego River Basin is an expansive 5,122-square-mile geologic trough which receives the combined flows from seven of New York's eleven Finger Lakes and therefore experiences regular flooding, particularly in the basin's relatively flat northernmost section.

The Task Force report found that annually, flooding in the Oswego River Basin accounts for \$13,644,000 in losses to structures and \$660,000 in losses to agricultural lands. Additionally, over the past five years flooding in the Oswego River Basin has caused \$16 million in damages to recreational assets like boat launches and docks.

Prior to 2021, the Upstate Flood Mitigation Task Force was inactive and sat dormant for five years after it was first created. Senator Mannion and Assemblyman Stirpe passed enabling legislation that reconstituted the Task Force, ensured it was fully appointed, and required a report by this summer, which was issued in July.

Senator Mannion and Assemblyman Stirpe thank the members of the Upstate Flood Mitigation Task Force and Executive Director of the Task Force, Canal Corporation Director Brian Stratton.

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To view the report, you can also click [here](#).