



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

Senator Young Announces Zoar Valley Safety Initiatives

CATHARINE YOUNG October 24, 2005

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On Sunday, October 23, 2005, State Senator Cathy Young (R,I,C - Olean) announced her initiative to increase public safety at Zoar Valley Multiple Use Area, a popular recreational area in northern Cattaraugus County.

"Zoar Valley is a gorgeous, wild natural area," said Senator Young. "Its spectacular beauty and ruggedness makes it alluring to people, but at the same time, it is extremely dangerous. The gorge is up to 500 feet deep in some places, and it has loose shale sides that are moss-covered, slippery and treacherous."

"Too often, visitors to Zoar Valley have suffered serious injury, and death. For the past few years, we have averaged about one death per year, plus multiple injury cases. This year was no exception, and last year, there were three fatalities. Families of some of the Zoar Valley victims have contacted me to take action. They don't want other families to suffer the tragedy that they have suffered."

During the press conference at the Gowanda Fire Department, Senator Young introduced the newly created Zoar Valley Task Force. The group, made up of state and local law enforcement, the Department of Environmental Conservation, and local county and town officials, will be charged with examining the current problems facing the recreational area and developing strategies to effectively aid in Senator Young's initiative.

"I have formed the Zoar Valley Task Force of first responders, law enforcement, government officials and community groups that will work together to educate the public, enforce laws, and coordinate rescues," said Senator Young. "I also have secured a \$25,000 state grant to buy more rescue equipment so the first responders have the tools they need. Every time someone gets lost or hurt, our first responders find themselves in a hazardous situation as they try to perform a rescue. We need a three-pronged approach of public education, enforcement and rescue training so we can save lives."

"Every time there is an incident at Zoar Valley, our first responders are putting their own lives on the line," Senator Young said. "They go into extremely hazardous situations to save those who have fallen or who have been hurt. Often, they have to trek for miles through wooded, rugged paths, or they scale huge cliffs that are slippery and give way. Carrying an injured person or a body out of Zoar Valley under these conditions is highly dangerous."

"The creation of the Task Force and grant funding is just the beginning of my effort to promote public safety and preserve Zoar Valley's spectacular natural attraction," Senator Young said. "I'm looking forward to working with the Task Force to achieve that goal."