



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Dean G. Skelos

Senate Gives Final Legislative Approval to Bill That Protects New York's Water Resources

DEAN G. SKELOS June 16, 2011

The New York State Senate today passed a bill protecting protect New York's environmental and economic future by improving management of water supplies and preventing over-consumption by large-scale users. The bill (S.3798), sponsored by Senator Mark Grisanti (R, Buffalo), ensures that water supplies will be protected to meet the needs of New York's residents, industry, agriculture and environment now and into the future.

"Passage of this monumental legislation will protect our environment by regulating the amount of water that can be extracted," Senator Grisanti said. "Under current law, the state does not have the proper oversight to regulate water withdrawals, and with this legislation they will be able to better protect our state's greatest natural resource -- its water. This protection is critical throughout New York, as well as in Western New York where the Great Lakes hold one-fifth of the world's fresh water. This legislation is supported by both the environmental and business community and shows how working together can achieve sound and necessary environmental policy. As Chairman of the Senate Environmental Conservation Committee, I am dedicated to achieving more victories by continuing to build these coalitions so we can move forward together to protect our environment and all the

citizens of New York."

"There is continuing pressure both here in New York and throughout the region to extract our finite water resources," Senate Majority Leader Dean G. Skelos said. "Implementing a statewide program to monitor the large-scale withdrawal of water is consistent with actions being taken in other states. It is an environmentally and economically responsible approach to ensuring adequate water supplies for drinking, recreating, farming and other commercial purposes, and maintaining ecological diversity for current and future generations."

New York State is fortunate to have plentiful water resources. The preservation and protection of these resources is vital to New York's residents and businesses, who rely on these resources for drinking water supplies, and to support agriculture, manufacturing and other industries and recreation in the state. Aquatic and terrestrial plants and animals are also dependent on these critical resources to maintain healthy populations and it is critical to protect water supplies to meet New York's long-term needs.

Currently, the state's authority to protect water withdrawals is largely limited to public water supplies to ensure adequate quantities of potable water. As a result, consumptive uses of water for agricultural, commercial, and industrial purposes remain largely unregulated by the state.

The bill enables the state Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to implement a permitting program for all water withdrawal systems with a capacity equal to or greater than 100,000 gallons per day. Applicable large-scale consumers could continue to obtain the water they need in a way that is protective of the overall quantity and quality of the water supply. The measure also relieves a regulatory burden for municipalities and some industry by removing the current permit issued for smaller water withdrawals. This focuses state monitoring on the water withdrawal projects that are most likely to have a significant impact on the state's water resources.

Heather Briccetti, Acting-President and CEO of The Business Council of New York State, Inc., said, "This bill provides a reasonable framework that will allow economic growth and activity to take place in New York State while protecting our water resources."

Darryl Banks, Deputy Director for Conservation Strategies and External Affairs for The Nature Conservancy in New York, said, "The Nature Conservancy commends Senator Grisanti and Assemblyman Robert Sweeney for their work as champions for New York's water resources during this legislative session. The water management legislation passed in the Senate today will create a statewide program that protects New York's ecologically and economically important water resources. In New York, our rivers, lakes and streams provide clean drinking water for millions of residents, offer countless opportunities for recreation generating millions of dollars in tourism revenue, and have historically supported fisheries from brook trout to oysters, some of which are now critically endangered."

Albert E. Caccese, Executive Director of Audubon New York, said, “Audubon New York applauds Senator Mark Grisanti and Assemblyman Robert Sweeney for championing this critical legislation to improve the management of our water resources. New York is blessed with an abundance of freshwater which is critical to the quality of life and economic well being for the state’s residents, all while providing vital habitat for birds, fish and other wildlife species . Although seemingly limitless, water is a finite resource which must be properly managed to prevent against depletion. This legislation will ensure the state is adequately protecting our freshwater to provide millions of people with clean drinking water, and realize countless other important benefits from supporting commerce and industry to providing for recreation and tourism.”

Adrienne Esposito, Executive Director of Citizens Campaign for the Environment, said, “While Great Lakes freshwater is abundant, it is also finite and requires sustainable management to ensure that current and future generations have access to clean drinking water, as well as to support aquatic ecosystems, agriculture, industry, and recreation. This critical legislation provides an essential and meaningful step for New York to fulfill our commitment to protect significant water bodies in our state. We are thrilled the Legislature has passed this bill and congratulate Senator Grisanti and Assemblyman Sweeney for their commitment to clean water resources.”

Connecticut, New Jersey, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts all have programs that regulate industrial, commercial and agricultural water withdrawals. In addition, the adoption of this legislation would implement key provisions of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin Water Resources Compact, of which New York is a member. The Great Lakes basin, which

comprises 50 percent of New York by area, contains freshwater resources that are under ongoing development pressure and increasing water supply demand.

The bill will be sent to the Governor.