



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Betty Little

## Senate approves bill to support private land stewardship

BETTY LITTLE June 10, 2014

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The State Senate today approved legislation sponsored by Senator Betty Little that would create a New York state tax credit for a portion of property taxes paid on privately held lands enrolled in a forestry stewardship or habitat conservation plan.

The tax credit would provide an incentive for private forest landowners to keep their land from development and preserve the benefits to wildlife, water quality, and the forest-based economy provided by contiguous forests.

“Stewardship of privately owned land helps protect habitats important to many species,” said Senator Betty Little.

The refundable tax credit would be 25 percent of school, county and town property tax paid, capped at \$10,000. Because New York State would pay the refund, there would be no cost to schools or municipalities. The estimated annual state fiscal impact is \$3 million.

To qualify for the credit, a landowner would need to apply to the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). An eligible property would be a tract of land of at least 25 contiguous acres that has been inspected by the DEC, a wildlife biologist certified by the The Wildlife Society or a fisheries biologist certified by the American Fisheries Society.

A written agreement between the landowner and DEC would describe the management of the property to conserve the value of the land as wildlife, fish, shellfish or crustacean habitat for a period of not less than five years.

“It would be voluntary and managed in partnership with the Department of Environmental Conservation. The state fiscal impact is small and the local tax base would not be affected. There’s a public benefit in encouraging the private stewardship efforts of individual owners, families and businesses.”

Companion legislation is sponsored by Assemblyman Dan Stec.