



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Go Green, and Celebrate Earth Day

PATTY RITCHIE April 14, 2015

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### Senator Ritchie's Weekly Column

Fresh air, clean water and unpolluted land. These are things that often times, we take for granted. Keeping the air we breathe, the water we drink and the land we live on free from pollution is a team effort, and on Earth Day, we celebrate our planet and make an extra push to keep it clean, as well as preserve it for future generations.

On April 22<sup>nd</sup>, we will mark the 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Earth Day. Founded in the United States in 1970 as a way to raise awareness about the importance of protecting the environment, Earth Day is now celebrated across the globe, and features countless events aimed at cleaning up our planet. If you're still looking for a way to observe Earth Day, here are a few ideas:

***Check out community events:*** Across our region, a number of events are being held throughout the week to shine a spotlight on Earth Day. On April 18<sup>th</sup> at the New York State Zoo at Thompson Park in Watertown, zoo staff and the state Department of Environmental Conservation will be hosting an Earth Day celebration. In addition to special exhibits and informational events, the Development Authority of the North Country and the Watertown Urban Mission will also be collecting unwanted clothing and other textiles.

***Do some spring cleaning:*** With warmer temperatures, we're now seeing trash and other debris that was once buried beneath piles of snow. Take time on Earth Day to clean up the area surrounding your home—and don't forget to appropriately dispose of items that can be recycled, as well as hazardous materials, like pesticides, antifreeze, solvents and other similar items. Jefferson, St. Lawrence and Oswego all host free hazardous waste collections. For more information on how to dispose of hazardous items in Jefferson and St. Lawrence Counties, visit [www.northcountryrecycles.org](http://www.northcountryrecycles.org). If you're an Oswego County resident, please visit the Department of Solid Waste's website at [www.co.oswego.ny.us/dsw](http://www.co.oswego.ny.us/dsw).

**Take care of tires:** It's estimated that one waste tire—whether it's left in your yard, driveway or somewhere else—can act as breeding ground for approximately one million mosquitoes. Not only do they collect water and breed disease-carrying mosquitoes, when they burn, they release toxic and potentially harmful pollutants into the air. In recent years, I've hosted free tire disposal events throughout Central and Northern New York, where more than 10,000 tires were discarded responsibly. If you have waste tires you need to get rid of, please contact your local county transfer station.

**Plant a tree:** Did you know, that according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the net cooling effect of one, young healthy tree is equivalent to ten room-size air conditioners operating 20 hours a day? Trees play a key role in protecting the environment—they help reduce global warming, remove harmful chemicals from soil, provide habitats for animals and more. For great tips on how you can make a difference this Earth Day by planting a tree, visit [www.arboday.org](http://www.arboday.org).

Earth Day 2015 comes just several weeks after the enactment of a new State Budget that makes significant investments in key environmental initiatives that will benefit communities throughout our region, including the following:

- \$177 million for New York's Environmental Protection Fund, which is an increase of \$15 million that will be used to support a wide variety of projects that help protect open spaces and ensure clean air and water for the people of our state;
- \$152.5 million in new funding for environmental infrastructure improvements in the areas of flood control, clean-ups and restoration projects; and
- Record funding for farmland preservation.

When it comes to preserving the quality of our air, water and land, every little bit helps. I hope that on Earth Day—and every day—you'll join me in making an extra effort to protect our planet.