



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

John J. Flanagan

## Senator Flanagan Joins Governor Cuomo And Other Officials To Launch Statewide Water Quality Initiatives

JOHN J. FLANAGAN February 18, 2016

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Senate Majority Leader John Flanagan (2<sup>nd</sup> Senate District) joined a host of local officials as Governor Andrew M. Cuomo announced a series of aggressive water quality initiatives to protect both the public health and the environment. The Governor is creating a Statewide Water Quality Rapid Response Team charged with identifying and developing plans to swiftly address critical drinking water contamination concerns, as well as related groundwater and surface water contamination problems. The Governor is also proposing

statewide regulations in the coming days to regulate mulch processing facilities to strengthen oversight and safeguard natural resources.

In addition to these statewide actions, the Governor announced today that the state has begun testing samples from the Northrop Grumman plume on Long Island. The state will also partner with the U.S. Geological Survey to conduct a comprehensive ground water survey to ensure Long Island's drinking water is protected and properly managed.

"Every New Yorker has a fundamental right to clean and safe drinking water," said Governor Cuomo. "Water is a priceless resource that requires the highest levels of protection, and I am proud to continue this administration's legacy of standing up for the environment. We are taking aggressive and proactive steps to ensure clean and healthy communities throughout the state – both for current residents and for generations to come."

Senate Majority Leader John J. Flanagan said: "We are blessed in New York State and on Long Island to have the availability of high-quality drinking water, but we also have a responsibility to protect it. At the end of the day, nothing is more important to New Yorkers and their families than the air they breathe and the water they drink. That's why I'm pleased the state is taking the lead in ensuring we have a mechanism in place to respond quickly and efficiently when issues arise so our water is clean and safe, and sustainable for future generations. I thank the Governor and my colleagues in the Senate and Assembly - particularly Senator Ken LaValle and Senator Carl Marcellino - for their work and attention to this important quality-of-life issue."

The initiatives announced today include:

**Water Quality Rapid Response Team**

The Governor's new statewide Water Quality Rapid Response Team is directed to develop the nation's leading water quality program and prepare a comprehensive action plan to immediately address water quality issues raised by municipalities and concerned citizens, tackling matters ranging from currently regulated contaminants, such as lead, to emerging contaminants, like perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA). The Action Plan will include recommendations to strengthen the state's existing drinking water, groundwater and surface water protection programs. The Team will review and incorporate the best available science and may include new review standards for currently unregulated contaminants, enhanced testing and oversight of drinking water systems, including private wells, and state of the art drinking water treatment options.

Department of Environmental Conservation Acting Commissioner Basil Seggos and Department of Health Commissioner Dr. Howard Zucker will co-chair the Team, which will include the Secretary of State and the Commissioners of Agriculture and Markets, Office of General Services, Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services and Homes and Community Renewal, the Chair of the Public Service Commission, the President of the Empire State Development Corporation and the President and CEO of the Environmental Facilities Corporation.

### **Issuance of Regulations to Provide Protections to Industries Linked to Potential Ground Water Contamination**

The mulch industry is vital to the local economy and environment in communities across the state, but is also currently unregulated, and runoff can endanger local water supplies. At the Governor's direction, next week, the Department of Environmental Conservation will propose for public comment draft regulations for mulch facilities to increase oversight and provide enhanced safeguards. The proposed regulations will require facilities to establish

water runoff management plans to protect groundwater and place restrictions on pile size and storage to reduce the risk of fires, odor and dust. Further, the regulations will require monitoring wells at some facilities to ensure groundwater is not being contaminated.

In consultation with the Suffolk County Department of Health Services, DEC will review mulch and compost sites on Long Island to determine if any water quality issues exist from the operation of these facilities and develop appropriate remedial action if necessary.

### **Northrop Grumman Plume Sampling**

Today the Department of Environmental Conservation collected the first samples from six monitoring wells in the Northrop Grumman plume and provided them to an expert lab to conduct a cutting-edge forensic analysis. Specifically, this testing will determine the extent of toxic 1,4-Dioxane contamination in the plume, which was used in airplane manufacturing. This highly specialized compound-specific isotope analysis will allow the state's expert engineers and geologists to fingerprint the source or sources of plume groundwater contamination to inform the remediation strategy. State testing will be expanded as warranted and results will be shared with the Massapequa Water District and other water districts as soon as they are available. The sampling was made possible after the state ordered Northrop Grumman and the U.S. Navy to open access to monitoring well so samples could be obtained.

### **Comprehensive Groundwater Study for Long Island**

In order to further protect the groundwater resources on Long Island, the Governor will direct \$6 million to study the effective management of this finite resource. The study, which

will be done in partnership with the U.S. Geological Survey and Nassau and Suffolk Counties, will examine saltwater intrusion, surface water impacts, contaminant transport and sustainable yield. The result will be a groundwater flow model, the international standard for understanding and managing groundwater impacts.

Department of Environmental Conservation Acting Commissioner Basil Seggos said:

“Governor Cuomo has once again demonstrated his national leadership on the environment and public health. I look forward to co-leading the new Team with Commissioner Zucker and developing solutions to improve the quality of New York’s drinking, ground and surface waters. As the Department is comprehensively attacking threats to water quality from nitrogen pollution on Long Island and beyond, we will bolster our efforts by working with leading experts to ensure public health and the environment are fully protected from other harmful waterborne contaminants.”

**Please [click here](#) for Governor’s PowerPoint presentation regarding this issue and [click here](#) to view Senator Flanagan’s comments during today’s press conference.**