



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Expert Lends Voice To Drought Discussion

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It isn't going to be an easy road ahead for our hardworking farmers across Central and Northern New York as they continue to struggle with dry wells and look for ways to cope with the repercussions of the summer's drought. That's why, I've been working in recent months to ensure they have the support needed to rebound and continue to be part of New York State's leading industry.

Just last week, I helped to connect those struggling with drought with groundwater expert Dr. M. Todd Walter, a hydrogeologist who is the Director of the New York State Water Resources Institute, Department of Biological and Environmental Engineering at Cornell University. During a special presentation held in Watertown, Dr. Walter provided information on the recent drought, our current groundwater situation, how long it may take to recover and how to protect ourselves in the future. In addition, Dr. Walter also talked with the meeting's nearly 50 attendees about the importance of collecting and utilizing data to help gain improved insight into how to better prepare for potential future drought conditions.

In recent months, I have seen firsthand the impact the drought has had on our farmers, severely damaging crops—including everything from corn to Christmas trees—as well as causing other challenges, such as increased costs due to having to truck in water and purchase feed. While a good amount of snow and rainfall in the coming months could help the situation farmers and others currently face, according to Dr. Walter, it may take a couple years before groundwater again reaches normal levels and wells fully rebound—making it more important than ever to identify ways to support our farmers.

As Chair of the Senate Agriculture Committee, I remain committed to looking for ways the state can help our farmers rebound and protect themselves—and their operations—from similar weather conditions in the future. As I continue to do so, it will be critically important to hear from those who have been directly affected by the dry conditions. If you are a farmer impacted by drought, I invite you to share with me the toll it has taken on your business by contacting me via my website—www.ritchie.nysenate.gov—or by calling (315) 782-3418.