



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pamela Helming

## Senator Helming Touts Source Water Protection in State Budget

PAMELA HELMING April 28, 2017

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Water is a precious resource, and the efforts to protect drinking water must begin at its source. To address this critical issue, Senator Pam Helming (R,C,I – 54th District) championed the inclusion of funding in the State Budget for source water protection under the newly enacted Clean Water Infrastructure Act of 2017.

The need for funding to protect water resources is clear. It is painfully obvious every time a water main breaks or a municipality spends their limited funds to dig up and replace aging pipes. Yet, as important as it is to solve these problems, infrastructure improvements alone are limited in their effectiveness for addressing issues that arise at the earliest stages of the water cycle.

“If pristine sources of water become contaminated, the ability to provide quality drinking water becomes increasingly complex and costly,” said Senator Helming.

As a direct result of Senator Helming’s efforts, the State Budget includes \$110 million to fund a proactive approach to preserving sources of drinking water. This funding can be used for the voluntary conservation of small, strategic areas that directly impact drinking water sources, such as lakes and watersheds. These buffer areas will protect against pollutants and provide natural filtration for water.

Examples of buffer activities can include forestation, wetland restoration, and protection of the barriers that protect streams from nearby runoff.

Not only will these initiatives enhance water quality at the source, they will also improve efficiency and reduce costs in the process of bringing drinking water to residents.

Importantly, these initiatives will lower the reliance on water treatment chemicals and ease the burden on existing water infrastructure.

“I recognized early on during the budget process that we need to include funding to protect drinking water at its source. Representing a district that includes much of the Finger Lakes, and extends to the shores of Lake Ontario, serves as a distinct reminder of the importance of water in our daily lives,” said Senator Helming.

The Clean Water Infrastructure Act of 2017 includes \$2.5 Billion to provide for the cost of clean water projects including infrastructure repair and replacement, intermunicipal water infrastructure, green infrastructure, and a septic system rebate program.

The Act also directs financial assistance for farmers to minimize the impact of agricultural activities on water sources and comply with Concentrated Animal Feed Operation regulations. These projects will protect water sources from unintended farm runoff, which is increasingly relevant due to the sloping hills that are a hallmark of the Finger Lakes region.

“As the Senate Chair of the Legislative Commission on Rural Resources, I am happy to establish a commitment to protect the safety of our sources of drinking water. Doing so will provide municipalities and residents with peace of mind, both within my district and throughout New York State,” said Senator Helming.

*Reaction from Local and State Industry Leaders:*

"With the increase of harmful algal bloom events across the Finger Lakes, it is essential to take steps to protect the safety of our drinking water for our communities. New York State's investment in programs to support better water quality in our source waters is most welcome," said Dr. Lisa Cleckner, Director of the Finger Lakes Institute at Hobart and William Smith Colleges.

"Every farmer values being a good steward of the environment, and the \$50 million in the new water infrastructure plan will help us as maintain the strong water quality record we have in this state. Seneca County Farm Bureau appreciates Senator Helming's support of the initiative, and we value her partnership with the agricultural community," said Ann Marie Heizmann, President of the Seneca County Farm Bureau.

"We thank Senator Helming for her leadership in getting the Clean Water Infrastructure Act, and particularly source water protection, into the State Budget. Source water protection funding will be utilized to expand and restore our natural capital infrastructure areas such as wetlands, floodplains, and other green areas that filter out nutrients, bacteria, and sediment from stormwater runoff before these pollutants enter Canandaigua Lake. Restoring and improving the resiliency of the landscape to filter out pollutants from human dominated land uses is the best approach to reducing the levels of blue green algae that create serious economic impacts within the Finger Lakes region and across New York State," said Kevin Olvany, Watershed Program Manager for the Canandaigua Lake Watershed Council, an intermunicipal coalition of 14 municipalities to protect Canandaigua Lake.

"Not only is source water protection integral to ensuring good quality drinking water supplies for the many residents of Central and Western New York who are especially dependent upon the Finger Lakes for their drinking water, but it has the added benefit of protecting the aquatic resources of these same water bodies. Investments in source water protection ensure clean water and healthy habitats for aquatic flora and fauna, as well as

supporting tourism, recreation, and a better quality of life for the people of the region,” said Kristy LaManche, Program Coordinator for the Finger Lakes - Lake Ontario Watershed Protection Alliance.

“The Clean Water Infrastructure Act is a significant accomplishment as it will provide resources needed to address pressing water quality issues in the Finger Lakes. We applaud Senator Helming for her leadership on this issue,” said Andrew Zepp, Executive Director of the Finger Lakes Land Trust.

“New York’s family farms take environmental stewardship seriously. The \$50 million being set aside for cost sharing programs to support dairy nutrient management will be valuable to protecting water quality throughout the Finger Lakes and across New York State. We also recognize the need to protect drinking water resources for farmers and their customers across New York. The entire proposal is a win-win. New York Farm Bureau appreciates Senator Helming’s efforts to ensure the funding will be available for the protection of our water resources,” said David Fisher, President of the New York Farm Bureau.

“The Nature Conservancy is grateful for Senator Helming’s commitment to deliver a comprehensive water quality program that protects water at its source as a cost effective and proactive way to secure clean water for our communities. The Finger Lakes and Great Lakes region relies on clean water for our environment, our economy, and our everyday lives. This funding will help ensure that we can protect our vital resources so we can thrive now and into the future,” said Jim Howe, The Nature Conservancy’s director in Central & Western New York.

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