



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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O'Mara and Palmesano call on Cuomo to include Canandaigua, Keuka, and Seneca lakes on priority list for action to combat harmful algal blooms

THOMAS F. O'MARA February 15, 2018

| ISSUE: **WATER QUALITY**



Seneca, Canandaigua, and Keuka Lakes are pivotal tourism centers, are largely used for drinking water, and have been left out of the priority lakes list eligible for funding.

Corning, N.Y., February 15—State Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C,I-Big Flats) and Assemblyman Phil Palmesano (R,C,I-Corning) have urged Governor Andrew Cuomo to amend his 2018-2019 state budget proposal to include Canandaigua, Keuka, and Seneca lakes on a list of 12 priority

lakes in New York State considered vulnerable to harmful algal blooms (HABs) threatening drinking water sources.

The governor's proposed budget calls for \$65 million in funding to establish a state program to provide assistance and establish action plans to combat HABs threatening the 12 priority lakes statewide. Cuomo has identified the following 12 priority lakes: Conesus Lake; Honeoye Lake; Chautauqua Lake; Owasco Lake; Skaneateles Lake; Cayuga Lake; Lake Champlain at Port Henry; New York portion of Lake Champlain at Isle La Motte watershed; Lake George; Lake Carmel; Palmer Lake; and Putnam Lake.

In January, O'Mara, Chair of the Senate Environmental Conservation Committee, Palmesano, Assembly Minority Leader Brian Kolb (R,C,I,Ref-Canandaigua), and Senator Pam Helming (R,C,IP-Geneva) wrote to Cuomo urging him to include Canandaigua, Keuka, and Seneca lakes on the priority list.

Their letter states, "As you stated in your 2018-2019 budget presentation, filtration systems for drinking water can cost billions of dollars. This is why we are supportive of the \$65 million budget initiative to combat harmful algal blooms (HABs) in Upstate New York that threaten drinking water sources, upstate tourism in the Finger Lakes Region, and recreational use of lakes.

"However, your budget proposal falls short of fully supporting Upstate lakes and tourism as the twelve priority lakes listed in your proposal that are considered vulnerable to HABs is incomplete. You state that the reason these twelve lakes were chosen is due to their importance as critical sources of drinking water and their vitality to tourism in Upstate NY. Yet Seneca, Canandaigua, and Keuka Lakes are pivotal tourism centers, are largely used for drinking water, and have been left out of the priority lakes list eligible for funding."

[see attached copy of the full letter attached above]

Over the past week, Cuomo has been announcing amendments to his original 2018-19 proposed state budget. He has until the end of this week to complete the annual 30-day budget amendment process.

O'Mara, Palmesano, Kolb, and Helming have warned the governor that not identifying Canandaigua, Keuka, and Seneca lakes as priorities would unfairly jeopardize the Finger Lakes region, "It is imperative that our localities are equipped with support to combat algal blooms and there is awareness amongst residents and tourists of how to respond to these threats in the water if they should come upon them. The presence of HABs in our lakes will only increase if we are not proactive.

"As such, we respectfully request that you amend your proposal to include Seneca, Canandaigua and Keuka Lakes on the priority list for funding in your \$65 million 4-point initiative to aggressively combat harmful algal blooms to target HABs. Anything less would be a disservice to the residents of the region and the valuable contributions the lakes play to the growing tourism and economic vitality of our area."