



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Pamela Helming

Senator Helming Secures \$200,000 in State Budget to Protect Seneca Lake

SENATOR PAM HELMING August 23, 2018

GENEVA – Senator Pam Helming today announced that she secured \$200,000 in this year’s New York State budget for the Town of Geneva to establish the position of Seneca Lake Watershed Manager. The watershed manager will oversee the implementation of the Seneca Lake Watershed Management Plan to help protect Seneca Lake and safeguard our drinking water.

“The Finger Lakes as a whole, and specifically Seneca Lake, have experienced significant amounts of harmful algal blooms and toxic blue-green algae in recent years. These contaminants threaten municipal water systems that use Seneca Lake as their source water. For example, last summer harmful algal blooms were found within 50 yards of intake pipes for several systems along the lake, including the Village of Waterloo, which supplies the majority of drinking water in Seneca County. This Seneca Lake Watershed Manager position will combat this invasion by bringing together the Town of Geneva and other communities along Seneca Lake to address these water quality challenges through a coordinated, collaborative effort. I am grateful that we were able to secure this critically important funding in the state budget, and I look forward to seeing the Seneca Watershed Intermunicipal Organization grow and thrive with the addition of this position,” Senator Helming said.

With this funding, the Town of Geneva will coordinate regional efforts to promote watershed management activities in the Seneca Lake watershed through the Seneca Watershed Intermunicipal Organization. The Seneca Lake Watershed Management Plan has an implementation section that relies upon the coordinated actions of several communities and five counties to protect water quality, but there is no single entity tasked with achieving and implementing the goals of the plan. This need will be met by establishing a Seneca Lake Watershed Manager position whose sole focus is to identify, coordinate, and implement actions to address water quality challenges in Seneca Lake, such as high nutrient levels, contaminants, and aquatic invasive species.

The position will be based in Geneva at the Finger Lakes Institute at Hobart and William Smith Colleges. The watershed manager will develop and deliver targeted outreach and education programs that improve local government decision-making regarding the Finger Lakes and Seneca Lake and support the strategies and actions identified in the watershed management plan. This funding will also allow the Organization to create a financial plan to become self-sustaining after this initial state funding runs out.

Geneva Town Supervisor Mark Venuti said, “A watershed manager for Seneca Lake is critical to moving from great ideas and recommendations to action. I applaud Senator Helming for not just appreciating the need but working hard to achieve the solution. This is wonderful news.”

Joseph Campbell, President of Seneca Lake Guardian said, “We commend Senator Helming for her hard work and leadership. The Senator has demonstrated that she is a great steward of Seneca Lake. The position of Seneca Lake Watershed Manager will be vital to ensure that all of the communities relying on Seneca Lake’s water continue working together to keep it swimmable, drinkable, and fishable for generations to come.”