



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Mario R. Mattera

Senator Mattera Celebrates Earth Day With Smithtown Students

MARIO R. MATTERA April 28, 2021

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To commemorate Earth Day 2021, Senator Mario R. Mattera (2nd Senate District) and Assemblyman Michael Fitzpatrick (8th Assembly District) were proud to be on hand as the **Accompsett Middle School** in Smithtown was awarded a \$5,000 grant by the **Long Island Regional Planning Council** as part of their Long Island Water Quality Challenge. The funding will go to the school's proposed native plant and pollinator garden which will serve as an 'ongoing classroom' on reducing the use of chemicals and fertilizers and preventing nitrogen runoff.

The Long Island Water Quality Challenge is a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) competition that encourages young students to reduce runoff and nitrogen pollution

on school grounds and incorporate those projects into ongoing educational programs.

“Congratulations to Principal Paul McNeil, the teachers at Accomsett Middle School and the students for being one of only two schools to receive a \$5,000 grant in the Long Island Regional Planning Council’s Long Island Water Quality Challenge (LIWQC). As a former member of the Suffolk County Water Authority Board, I have long been committed to protecting the water in and around Long Island and it is so great see our young residents get involved. Thank you very much to the Long Island Regional Planning Council and Chairman John Cameron for establishing this program and for inspiring the students in our community,” stated Senator Mattera.

“Our Pollinator Garden has given students the opportunity to see how nature can help to solve the nitrogen problem on Long Island,” said Amy Olander of Accomsett Middle School. “By getting the students involved in planning and implementing the garden they see how the STEM disciplines are used to turn an idea into reality. Students are also learning that by planting native species, we help our pollinators and birds so our environment can be healthy and sustainable. We are grateful to have this chance to show the community that even small changes in our own yards can help the environment.”

“Excess nitrogen presents a serious threat to the health and sustainability of our ground and surface waters all across Long Island,” noted John Cameron, LIRPC Chairman. “We can take positive steps today to instill a sense of urgency in our students – who are the leaders and stewards of tomorrow – about the need to reduce the use of fertilizers and pesticides, and how to prevent harmful runoff from reaching our waterways.”

State Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner Basil Seggos said, “New York State is taking numerous steps to address the nitrogen pollution that has degraded the waters of Long Island, and collaborating with key partners is instrumental to our success. The Long Island Regional Planning Council, in partnership with DEC, conducted this STEM

Challenge to raise local awareness and encourage the younger generation to become involved in the solution. The nitrogen problem is multifaceted and impacts all Long Islanders, but through hard work at the local, county, state and federal levels, the water quality will improve.”