



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Shelley B. Mayer

Senator Mayer and Assemblyman Otis Pass Legislation to Protect Shorelines and the Environment from Increased Climate Change Related Hazards

SENATOR SHELLEY B. MAYER June 22, 2023

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(ALBANY, NY) - Communities across New York State face intensifying climate change related hazards, including dangerous floods, and the New York State Senate and Assembly have now passed an important bill which will protect our shorelines and environment from these threats. S.5186A/A.5221A, sponsored by Senator Shelley B. Mayer and Assemblyman Steve Otis passed the Assembly on June 21, preceded by passage in the Senate on June 5. The bill, if signed by Governor Hochul, will require the Department of Environmental Conservation to encourage the use of nature-based solutions as the preferred approach for stabilizing tidal shorelines in the oversight and regulatory decisions of the agency.

Hurricane Ida devastated communities and homes across New York, particularly those along the Sound Shore communities of our district. Seventeen New Yorkers lost their lives, and the storm caused \$7.5 billion in damages, including damage to 11,000 homes and many roads. As storms become more frequent, intense, and dangerous due to climate change, our communities become more vulnerable to these threats. Nature-based solutions, or living shorelines, are shoreline management techniques that are supported or inspired by nature or natural processes and functions and are designed to mimic natural shorelines, improving the

resilience of our shorelines and communities. Living shorelines have a **wide range of benefits**, including: the reduction of flooding and erosion, improved water quality, providing greater stability against threats of storms, attracting wildlife, and many more. The bill was inspired by the work of Save the Sound and Riverkeeper, two major advocacy organizations confronting the impacts of climate change on water bodies and inland areas.

Senator Shelley B. Mayer said, “After Hurricane Ida, many constituents reached out to me for assistance with flood damage. I was happy my office could help individuals but the systemic impact of climate change requires much more. This bill will encourage DEC to adopt a more proactive approach to regulatory oversight of shoreline management that will assist our shore communities in reducing the likelihood of flooding and water damage. I thank Save the Sound and Riverkeeper for their work inspiring this bill in their efforts to combat climate change and for working with my office on this legislation.”

Assemblyman Steve Otis said, “Living shoreline principles are vital to improving coastal resilience, reducing flood impacts, preventing shoreline erosion and protecting natural habitats. This legislation will help advance these nature-based policies at a time when sound practices are needed. Thanks go to Riverkeeper, The Nature Conservancy, Save the Sound and other environmental groups in supporting this measure. This is important legislation for coastal communities.”

“The passage of the Living Shorelines Act marks a major step forward for responsible management of shorelines along tidal waterways in New York State, and will help ensure that permitting decisions support natural shorelines that provide both habitat for wildlife and flood protections for communities,” **said Jeremy Cherson, Senior Manager of Government Affairs for Riverkeeper**. “Thank you Senator Mayer and Assemblyman Otis for recognizing the importance our shorelines can play in promoting biodiversity and thriving communities. We strongly urge Governor Hochul to sign this legislation as soon as possible.”

David Ansel, Vice President of Water Protection, Save the Sound, “We thank Senator Mayer for her leadership in passing the Living Shorelines bill. This important legislation will strengthen NYSDEC’s ability to prioritize living shorelines over hardened shorelines in project permits, protect coastal communities from erosion, storm surge, and sea level rise, and help restore critical habitat for Long Island Sound. Nature-based features have the ability to adapt to changing conditions, making them an essential tool for strengthening resiliency in the face of climate change. We are actively involved in a restoration project nearby in Little Neck Bay, and look forward to finding opportunities to utilize living shorelines to stabilize the coastline along the Sound Shore of Westchester County.”