



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Steven D. Rhoads

## **Senator Rhoads Leads Mill Pond Cleanup with DEC — 1,600 Pounds of Invasive Water Chestnuts Removed from Wantagh's Waters**

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## Local Effort Highlights Ongoing Fight Against Invasive Species and Commitment to Environmental Stewardship

WANTAGH, NY — On July 12th, Senator Steve Rhoads joined forces with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), his team of interns, and community partners for the annual Water Chestnut Pull at Mill Pond in Wantagh—a hands-on effort to remove invasive species and protect the local ecosystem.

Senator Rhoads, a Wantagh native and steadfast advocate for Long Island’s natural resources, climbed into a kayak alongside his team to pull 1,600 pounds of invasive water chestnut plants from the pond. The initiative is part of an ongoing effort to preserve the health and biodiversity of Long Island’s freshwater habitats.

Water chestnuts, native to parts of Asia, Africa, and Australia, have become a growing environmental threat to Mill Pond and other freshwater bodies across the region. These plants form dense mats on the water’s surface, block sunlight, and deplete dissolved oxygen levels—creating dangerous conditions for native aquatic species.

This marks Senator Rhoads’ 9th year participating in the event—first as a County Legislator and now continuing the tradition as a State Senator.

“Long Island’s environmental future depends on what we do today,” **said Senator Rhoads**. “Mill Pond is a treasured part of our community, and protecting it isn’t just a duty—it’s a personal responsibility. I’m proud to roll up my sleeves, get in the water, and take direct action to preserve the natural beauty and ecological health of the South Shore. I’ll continue working alongside local partners and environmental agencies to ensure our parks, ponds, and preserves remain safe, clean, and vibrant for generations to come.”

Senator Rhoads thanked the DEC and the many dedicated volunteers who took part in the cleanup effort, calling them “the heart of our community’s conservation movement.”

The event reflects Senator Rhoads’ broader commitment to championing environmental initiatives across Long Island—from protecting waterways and open space to fighting coastal erosion and supporting clean water infrastructure.