



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Dean G. Skelos

Senator Skelos and Assemblyman Weisenberg Announce Environmental Protection Funds Released for Study of Pollution in Western Bays

Dean G. Skelos

August 13, 2010



Senator Dean Skelos (R- Rockville Centre) and Assemblyman Harvey Weisenberg (D- Long Beach) announced today that \$596,902 in state funds has been released to fund a pollution study of the Western Bays of Long Island.

Senator Skelos and Assemblyman Weisenberg secured money from the Environmental Protection Fund's Open Space Account. The money will pay for a Total Maximum Daily Load Study of the Western Bay Quality Monitoring System. The study will be conducted by SUNY Stony Brook.

The western bay area is home to four sewage treatment plants and one power plant, that discharge 64.5 million gallons of wastewater on a daily basis into the shallow Western Bays. These facilities have amassed several violations over the years for the release of harmful materials into the bays. Preliminary testing indicates the level of pollutants to be well beyond safe levels.

"This funding will allow for the next phase in the long process of definitively addressing and correcting a situation that continues to denigrate Long Island's most precious natural resource," stated Assemblyman Weisenberg. "I am hopeful that the results of the study will enable access to federal funds."

"Water quality is a major concern for Long Island and it's critically important that we know exactly what materials are being released into the bays, what impact that is having on the water quality," Senator Skelos said. "With that information, we will be able to pursue further funds to ensure safe water quality."

New York Secretary of State and Chairwoman of the South Shore Estuary Reserve Council Lorraine Cortes-Vazquez said, "Improving water quality in New York by protecting the health and productivity of the South Shore Estuary is a critically

important investment for our state. The Department of State was pleased to have provided over \$806,000 to help advance this current assessment of pollutants affecting the western bays. The data from this assessment will help ensure we are able to further improve the estuary's water quality for years to come."

"I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to Senator Skelos and Assemblyman Weisenberg for their hard work and constant advocacy for our residents" said Nassau County Legislator Denise Ford. "This first TMDL study for the South Shore Estuary and Western Bays will provide needed funding to ensure that water quality issues are addressed. This funding demonstrates that when people work together, things can get done"

"Early last year, after project funds had already been secured and we were ready to go, Albany pulled the rug out from under the entire process when the governor mandated a freeze on all state spending" said Gerald Ottavino, of the Point Lookout Civic Association. Luckily, this barrier island has the perfect watchdogs and bureaucratic crowbars needed to pry requisite funding free from the Department of Budget - Legislator Ford, Assemblyman Weisenberg and Senator Skelos. Thank you all"

"The Albany budget battles have been long, tough and painful but fortunately one winner is our Western bays. This vital study will allow us to make critical decisions to protect water quality, finfish and shell fish bed, wetlands and more. After years of advocating and collaborating, we are thrilled the study will be advancing and a new vision for our Western Bays can emerge," said Adrienne Esposito, Executive Director, Citizens Campaign for the Environment. "We are delighted to be able to thank our elected leaders who have aggressively worked to advance this effort, including Senator Dean Skelos, Assemblyman Harvey Weisenberg, County Executive Mangano and Nassau Legislator Denise Ford."

"I am extremely pleased that the money for this study is moving forward and will truly benefit the Western Bays" said Rob Weltner of Operation Splash. "The data obtained through this study will allow for more informed decisions to be made and hopefully be the catalyst for additional funding to keep our waters clean for generations to come."

The study and its funding have been long sought by several local individuals, elected officials and organizations that seek to prevent further damage to our waterways.

Gerald Ottavino, the Point Lookout Civic Association, the Citizens Campaign for the Environment, and many others have combined efforts and successfully advocated for the funding.

####