



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Betty Little

Senate approves legislation to combat invasive species

BETTY LITTLE June 19, 2012

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The State Senate today gave final legislative approval to a bill (S.6826a) sponsored by Senator Betty Little that would restrict the sale, possession and importation of invasive species in an effort to combat a growing environmental and costly problem throughout New York.

"Invasive species are much more than a nuisance, but a threat to ecosystems," said Little. "As we've seen across the state, once invasives are introduced and take hold, dealing with them is time consuming and costly and they are almost always impossible to eradicate. The point of the legislation is to strengthen our first line of defense."

The legislation would require the Department of Environmental Conservation, in cooperation with the Department of Agriculture and Markets, to restrict the sale, purchase, possession, introduction, importation and transport of invasive species. Working in consultation with the Invasive Species Council, the state agencies would develop regulations dealing with the disposal and control of invasives, including a list of prohibited species that would be illegal to knowingly possess with the intent to sell, import, purchase or transport.

Penalties would range from a warning for a first violation to fines of not less than \$250 for subsequent violations. Financial penalties would be greater for nursery growers, operators of public vessels and commercial fishing vessels.

As part of the regulatory process, the legislation directs the agencies and council to consider establishing grace periods for prohibited and regulated species so businesses can plan the management of existing stock. Public hearings are also required as the regulations are developed which, Little said, will help raise awareness and educate about the harmful impacts of invasives species.

Groups in support include the New York State Farm Bureau, Nature Conservancy, Adirondack Landowners Association, Adirondack Council, Environmental Advocates of New York, New York State Association of Counties and Lake George Association.

The bill will be returned to the Assembly.