



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

## **\$50,000 State Grant to Help Clean Up Chautauqua Lake**

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July 12, 2012



CHAUTAUQUA LAKE -- Senator Catharine Young (R,C,I-57th District) and Assemblyman Andy Goodell (R,C-Chautauqua) announced they have secured another \$50,000 state grant to help clean up Chautauqua Lake.

The funding doubles the \$50,000 the lawmakers obtained in the state budget that was passed in March, totaling \$100,000 for this fiscal year that will be used by the Chautauqua Lake Association (CLA) to harvest invasive weeds.

“This situation has reached a high point of urgency, and Assemblyman Goodell and I were able to convince Albany of the immediate and dire need. You can’t have part of the CLA’s weed harvesting fleet sitting idle and areas not being tackled. Our goal is to get operations humming again to have maximum impact against the weeds this year, while looking at the future and long term management of aquatic invasive species,” Senator Young said.

“Our local economy and tax base depends heavily on having a clean and healthy lake. It brings in millions of tourism dollars, is the economic engine behind many of our small businesses, generates tax revenues, and enhances our quality of life,” she said.

Assemblyman Goodell noted that visitors to Chautauqua County spent about \$171 million last year, which directly translated into thousands of local jobs. The economic impact of Chautauqua Lake was also reflected in the fact that 26% of all property tax revenues are generated by properties near the Lake, even though these properties account for only 1% of the total number of homes in the county.

The state money adds to an \$80,000 allocation recently approved by the Chautauqua County Legislature for lake clean up as a challenge grant. The CLA is required to match the funds with another \$20,000, which it is actively raising. Senator Young said that those contributions still are necessary for the battle against the weeds.

“I can’t stress strongly enough that every penny is needed, and the state funding enhances what already has been approved. Everyone has been pitching together to help, including the Rotary Club’s adopt-a-shoreline project, and all of those efforts are greatly appreciated because they will make a difference,” she said.

Senator Young said that securing the state funds was not an easy task, especially since the state had grappled this year with a nearly \$3 billion budget shortfall due the national economy that had to be resolved.

“Assemblyman Goodell and I were resolute, and went into battle during the budget negotiations to have Chautauqua Lake put in the budget as a \$50,000 line item. Out of the more than 3,300 lakes in New York State, Chautauqua Lake is the only one specifically included in the budget, but we feel it is appropriate since the state owns the lake bottom,” she said.

For decades, Chautauqua Lake received an annual \$50,000 member item grant through the state Senate that was started by the late Senator Jess Present. It was continued through the efforts of Senator Patricia McGee, and by Senator Young after she was elected to the Senate in 2005.

“Unfortunately, the support for Chautauqua Lake was eliminated in 2009 and 2010 after Democrats who are controlled by New York City seized power in the state Senate. They diverted state resources that traditionally went upstate to downstate, which had devastating consequences, not only for the lake, but across the board. Since we regained the Senate Majority in 2011, we have been working hard to fix the damage that was done, and we are making great progress,” Senator Young said.

Senator Young said that she and Assemblyman Goodell not only have boosted state funding, but they have worked to carry on a steady revenue source that is designated to support all of the county’s waterways.

Chautauqua County’s occupancy tax was authorized by the state Legislature in 2003 at three percent to enhance the county’s tourism. In 2007, the state allowed it to be increased to five percent, with the two percent expressly being earmarked for improving the county’s waterways. The increased percentage brings in about \$500,000 to the county annually. The occupancy tax was renewed in 2011 through the efforts of Senator Young and Assemblyman Goodell.

The lawmakers also worked with the county to establish a Welfare to Work program, with welfare recipients providing manpower to clean up lake weeds. Recently, one of the participants was hired as a regular employee by the CLA, putting that individual into the workforce and off public assistance, Senator Young said.

“I commend everyone, including the county, private donors and volunteers, and the CLA for pulling together on this issue. We have to work together to get positive

results, and we are on both counts," she said.