



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Betty Little

## New law to protect waterways and natural habitat from invasive species

BETTY LITTLE July 26, 2012

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Governor Andrew M. Cuomo signed legislation to protect New York's waterways and natural habitat from the devastating environmental effects of invasive species.

"This new law will give the Department of Environmental Conservation and the Department of Agriculture and Markets the tools they need to protect our state's ecology from the harm that invasive species can cause," Governor Cuomo said. "This legislation ensures that the regulations governing invasive species are appropriate for New York's farming community and plant nurseries, while also protecting the environment. I commend the bill sponsors for their work on this legislation."

Invasive species threaten New York's environment by out-competing native species, diminishing biological diversity, and changing whole ecosystems. Invasive species are widely available in commerce for landscaping and aquaria, and include species such as Hydrilla, an aggressive aquatic invader that chokes out native plants, clogs water intakes and impedes recreation. Other invasive species, such as the Emerald Ash Borer and the Asian Long-Horned Beetle, can devastate New York's timber and forest products industry. Millions of dollars are spent annually in the United States to control such species.

Joe Martens, Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Conservation, said, "This law implements a critical recommendation of the Invasive Species Task Force and gives DEC and DAM more authority to actively regulate invasive species and prevent their spread. Invasive species are destructive to habitat and cause millions of dollars of damage, impacting NY's economy from shipping and agriculture to outdoor recreation. Now, we will have additional tools to combat their introduction and proliferation."

Darrel Aubertine, Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture and Markets, said, "This legislation signed into law by Governor Cuomo will help New York State guard against the harm that invasive species can cause. Our state's agriculture industry has felt the negative impacts of invasive species, and this new law will help farms fight against such threats while ensuring that landscaping businesses and nurseries are not adversely affected."

The legislation signed today by the Governor will help address the risk to New York's environment associated with invasive species becoming established within the state. The new law provides the Department of Environmental Conservation and the Department of Agriculture and Markets with the authority to regulate the sale, purchase, possession, introduction, importation and transport of invasive species and establishes penalties for those who violate such regulations.

Senator Betty Little said, "Combating invasive species is costly and time consuming. We need this law to strengthen our first line of defense. As we've seen in the Adirondacks and across New York, once an invasive takes hold eradicating it is almost always impossible. This new comprehensive and proactive

approach to educate the public, as well as hold those who are negligent accountable, will save taxpayers millions of dollars and protect the environment for future generations. I am grateful for Governor Andrew Cuomo's support on this important measure."

Assembly Member Bob Sweeney said, "The estimated economic impact of invasive species is \$120 billion per year nationwide. New York has not been immune to the devastation. Invasive species threaten our food supply, place strains on local budgets and can harm humans. Globalization has helped to accelerate the spread of invasive species, with new bugs arriving from all over the world. The legislation I authored strengthens DEC's powers to prevent and control invasive species. I am pleased Governor Cuomo has signed it into law."

The law takes effect in 180 days.

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