



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

David Carlucci

## New York and New Jersey Legislators Join with Homeowners to Urge Governor Cuomo to Sign Rockland/Bergen Bi-State River Commission Bill

DAVID CARLUCCI May 15, 2013

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*Joint Effort Between NY and NJ will Prevent Flooding Hazards Along Major Tributaries and Watersheds; Key Priority Among Hudson Valley Communities*

**PEARL RIVER, NY** – Senator David Carlucci (D-Rockland/Westchester) and Assemblyman Ken Zebrowski (D-Rockland), the chief architects of landmark legislation designed to prevent future flooding along the Mahwah River, Hackensack River, Ramapo River, and other

Hudson Valley waterways, today joined with a bi-partisan coalition of Rockland and New Jersey elected officials to urge Governor Cuomo to sign the Rockland/Bergen Bi-State River Commission into law. They were joined alongside Rockland County homeowners who have been affected by flooding stemming from the adjacent waterways. They themselves have borne the brunt of its consequences, having to deal with the financial, structural, and emotional consequences, and who for years have been pleading with state officials to develop a mechanism to prevent flooding from taking place.

**Senator David Carlucci (D-Rockland/Westchester) said:** "We must realize that our rivers and streams do not recognize artificial political boundaries. The people of New York and New Jersey have a mutual interest when it comes to dealing with problems associated with flooding. We are dealing with a situation that needs a broad regional approach, and by having both states at the table, we will be able to work together and find a solution that all residents can agree upon going forward."

**Assemblyman Ken Zebrowski (D-Rockland) said:** "The devastation caused by Hurricanes the last couple of years serve as reminder that the approaches being taken by individual municipalities is not working. Water control and flood management efforts need to be coordinated on a regional basis in order to be successful. We share more than a border with Bergen County and must work together to better manage our watershed for the benefit of the residents of both states. I urge the Governor to sign this important piece of legislation which is designed to mitigate future flooding hazards in Rockland and Bergen Counties."

**Assemblywoman Ellen Jaffee (D-Rockland) said:** "With the increase in catastrophic weather events in our region, it has become more important than ever for New York State to have formal policies with New Jersey to protect residents and businesses from flooding. The Rockland Bergen Bi-State Watershed Flood Prevention and Protection Act provides the means for our states to develop the effective flood and water management policies that our

communities desperately need. I am proud to have worked with Assemblyman Zebrowski to develop this sorely needed alliance with our friends in New Jersey in order to help prevent future devastation from the flooding that has become all too frequent in our counties."

Under the Carlucci-Zebrowski legislation, there are a litany of responsibilities and duties assigned to the commission, including:

- Assessing present and projected land use and land management practices and patterns in the region, as well as potential environmental threats
- Develop recommended regulations, procedures, policies, planning strategies and model ordinances
- Coordinate environmental cleanup, maintenance and protection by municipalities within the region, including among different state and local agencies
- Recommend state legislation and administrative action for benefit of the region
- Advocate for federal, state or private funding for environmental cleanup, maintenance or protection, including flood prevention projects and flood hazard remediation in the region
- Identify existing projected flood hazards
- Establish a bi-state comprehensive plan to remediate existing and projected flood hazards

The commission would be made up of 12 voting members with six (6) each from New York and New Jersey. Each voting member shall be resident voters of Rockland County, as well as Bergen, Essex or Hudson counties, respectively. The following officials would have the discretion of appointing each serving member:

#### **New York**

- Governor
- Senate President, Pro Tempore

- Assembly Speaker
- Senate Minority Leader
- Assembly Minority Leader
- Commissioner of Environmental Conservation (or his designee)

### **New Jersey**

- Governor
- Senate President Pro Tempore
- Assembly Speaker
- Senate Minority Leader
- Assembly Minority Leader
- Commissioner of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection

In addition, the commission would include six (6) non-voting members including: New York Department of Transportation Commissioner, New Jersey Department of Transportation Commissioner, Bergen County Executive, Rockland County Executive, United Water, Inc. representative, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers representative.

Many homeowners have suffered with flooding for decades, especially those residing near major rivers that feed into reservoirs. The complexity of the issue can be found when waterways affect different political jurisdictions. For example, the Hackensack River feeds into three different reservoirs -- Lake Tappan in Orangetown, as well as Woodcliff Lake and Oradell in New Jersey. Each lake also holds varying capacity levels as to how much water it can sustain, with flooding made worse when powerful storms such as Tropical Storm Irene can engulf houses and leave several feet of water damage behind.

Similar legislation has already been enacted in New Jersey last year when Governor Christie signed its own bi-state commission into law. Neither piece of legislation, in New York or New Jersey, can become law and properly be implemented until both Governors sign off on the design. This further highlights the importance of the interstate bipartisanship that will assist residents in both states.

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