



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jen Metzger

Senator Jen Metzger Announces \$400K for Flood Mitigation in Orange County's Black Dirt Region

JEN METZGER October 2, 2020

| ISSUE: **CLIMATE CHANGE, FARMLAND FLOOD MITIGATION, ORANGE COUNTY BLACK DIRT, STATE AND MUNICIPAL (SAM) FACILITIES GRANT**

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Orange County, NY...State Senator Metzger (SD-42) yesterday held a press conference in Westtown to announce a \$400,000 in State and Municipal Facilities Capital (SAM) grant for the third phase of the Wallkill Floodplain Bench Project to prevent flooding of farmland in the Black Dirt Region of Orange County. Farms suffered severe damage and economic losses from flooding caused by Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee, and the Floodplain Bench

Project is designed to improve resilience, creating a floodplain to accommodate floodwaters and provide a vegetative buffer between farms and the Wallkill River. At the press conference announcing the grant, the Senator was joined by the project's leadership at the Orange County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD), including Chairman John Wright, Director and Orange County Legislator Paul Ruszkiewicz, and Manager Kevin Sumner, along with Orange County Deputy County Executive Harry Porr, Warwick Town Supervisor Michael Sweeton, and Orange County Farm Bureau President John Lupinski.

Senator Metzger, who chairs the Senate's Committee on Agriculture, met with farmers and SWCD staff and board members soon after taking office in 2019 to hear about local plans and needs for improving agriculture's resilience to severe storms. The Black Dirt Region is particularly vulnerable to flooding, which can damage crops and yields and wash away this unique and irreplaceable topsoil. The SWCD completed two phases of the Floodplain Bench Project, but did not have the funds to undertake the third and final phase. Senator Metzger worked to secure \$400,000 in funding to move the final phase of the project forward, which will help protect farmland in Warwick, Minisink, and Wawayanda from flooding.

"Climate change is causing more frequent and more severe storms," **said Senator Jen Metzger.** "Our farms are truly on the front lines of its impacts, and need our support to become more resilient. The Black Dirt region is particularly vulnerable to flooding, and it is important to keep this floodplain mitigation project moving forward to protect this irreplaceable farmland and the soil and water resources that sustain it."

Orange County Soil and Water Conservation District Director and County Legislator Paul Ruszkiewicz said, "I want to thank Senator Metzger for securing this grant for us because, particularly, these days with COVID, funding for a lot of things has been a challenge. As Kevin mentioned, we've been struggling to piece money together to keep work going, and this grant certainly helps with that. Senator, thank you again for working on our behalf to

secure this funding.”

Deputy County Executive Harry Porr said, “Agriculture continues to be the county’s single greatest Industry. Investment in infrastructure that protects agricultural production is good investment. We genuinely appreciate the work Senator Metzger’s doing to make this important project happen.”

Orange County Farm Bureau President John Lupinski said, “Today is an important day for the farmers and everyone along the Wallkill River. I would like to thank Senator Metzger for her help in attaining this money for such an important endeavor.”

Warwick Town Supervisor Michael Sweeton said, “The funds from this grant to continue the bench project by OCSWCD is vital to the success of the efforts to prevent flooding of our critical black dirt farming area and the hard working farm families who are the heart of the Town's economy. I applaud Senator Metzger for securing these funds that are so critical.”

Jen Metzger represents the 42nd Senate District, which includes all of Sullivan County and parts of Delaware, Orange, and Ulster Counties. Senator Metzger serves as Chair of the Agriculture Committee and sits on the Environmental Conservation, Education, Health, Energy and Telecommunications, Local Government, Women’s Issues, Domestic Animal Welfare, and Legislative Commission on Rural Resources Committees.

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