

Subject: GOVERNOR CUOMO ANNOUNCES \$10.4 MILLION EFFORT TO IMPROVE LONG ISLAND WATER QUALITY, RESTORE SHELLFISH POPULATIONS AND BOLSTER RESILIENCY OF COASTAL COMMUNITIES

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GOVERNOR ANDREW M. CUOMO

GOVERNOR CUOMO ANNOUNCES \$10.4 MILLION EFFORT TO IMPROVE LONG ISLAND WATER QUALITY, RESTORE SHELLFISH POPULATIONS AND BOLSTER RESILIENCY OF COASTAL COMMUNITIES

Invests \$7.25 Million in Public Hatcheries Across Long Island and \$3.15 Million to Obtain Adult Shellfish

Shellfish Restoration Council to Direct Efforts and Coordinate Training

Investments Will Create Jobs Across Long Island

DEC to Establish One-Stop Shop to Expedite Permitting for Shellfish Cultivation

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today announced a \$10.4 million effort to improve Long Island's water quality and bolster the economies and resiliency of coastal communities by restoring native shellfish populations to coastal waters. To restore shellfish, New York State is establishing five new sanctuary sites in Suffolk and Nassau counties to transplant seeded clams and oysters and expanding public shellfish hatcheries in the two counties through a dedicated grant program.

"Protecting our natural assets is critically important for Long Island, and by restoring our shellfish populations and investing in the preservation of New York's coastal communities, we will strengthen the regional economy, create new jobs, and ensure our waters are clean," **Governor Cuomo said.** "We have one simple obligation - to leave this place better than we found it, and as we face the ongoing challenge of climate change, New York will continue to invest now to preserve the quality, resiliency and natural beauty of Long Island for generations to come."

Governor Cuomo made the announcement at the Halesite Fire Department in Suffolk County.

At the Governor's direction, New York State is establishing five shellfish sanctuary sites at strategic locations, where shellfish will both improve water quality and thrive, on both the north and south shores of Long Island in Nassau and Suffolk counties. The sites will be managed by SUNY Stony Brook and Cornell Cooperative Extension in partnership with municipalities and volunteer organizations. Suffolk County sanctuary sites include Bellport Bay, Shinnecock Bay, and Huntington Harbor. Nassau County sites include Hempstead and South Oyster bays.

Up to 179 million local-grown and harvested shellfish, developed to meet the specific needs of each body of water, will be seeded over the next two years, producing enough shellfish to filter

the water at these sites every three days. At each site, shellfish will include a mix of adult and juvenile clams and oysters. The sites will be monitored to assess survival, growth, and reproduction in order to gauge the effort's success and guide future seeding. The State will invest \$3.15 million to obtain 28 million adult shellfish from local distributors and harvesters.

The State is investing \$5.25 million in Suffolk County Cornell Cooperative Extension to expand its existing public shellfish hatchery and plant shellfish at the sanctuary sites. Nassau County will partner with CCE to host floating nurseries.

A new \$2 million grant program will help build or expand public shellfish hatcheries on Long Island. Each grantee will receive up to \$400,000, and discussions with the Towns of Brookhaven, Southampton, East Hampton, Hempstead, Islip and the Shinnecock Nation are already underway.

In addition, the New York Power Authority will work with the hatcheries to evaluate the potential for powering the shellfish hatcheries with renewable solar energy installations.

DEC Commissioner Basil Seggos said, "Governor Cuomo recognizes that Long Island's communities and ecosystems benefit from a healthy shellfish population. New York's investments in restoring shellfish will help clean Long Island's waters while creating jobs for local baymen and bringing our coastal heritage back to life."

John D. Cameron, Chairman, Long Island Regional Planning Council, said, "Governor Cuomo should be commended for his recognition of the economic and environmental importance of the shellfishing industry here on Long Island and its critical role in the fight against nitrogen pollution in the Island's marine ecosystem."

To support and guide restoration efforts, the Governor is establishing the Shellfish Restoration Council. The council will be co-chaired by SUNY Stony Brook, Cornell Cooperative Extension and Billion Oyster Project to monitor progress at the sanctuary and transplant sites, direct future restoration efforts, and coordinate training and educational efforts throughout the New York Marine and Coastal District.

The Governor is also directing DEC to establish a one-stop shop, including a user-friendly website, hotline, and local ombudsman, to streamline the permitting processes associated with shellfish cultivation for both restoration and commercial efforts.

Governor Cuomo announced the availability of funding for a Request for Proposals to identify the requirements and feasibility of farming shellfish and seaweed to remove nutrients from Long Island's waters and improve water quality. DEC is working with the Long Island Regional Planning Council and Nassau and Suffolk counties on the Long Island Nitrogen Action Plan to reduce the amount of nitrogen in Long Island's ground and surface waters. The release of this RFP complements efforts under LINAP. Funding for the RFP is from the State's EPF.

Funding for the shellfish restoration project is coming from the EPF and the historic \$2.5 billion Clean Water Infrastructure Act of 2017, Green Infrastructure Funds.

As recently as 50 years ago, more than half of the clams eaten in the United States were from Long Island's Great South Bay. When clams are abundant, they filter approximately 40 percent of area waters on a daily basis. Due to a variety of factors, including water quality and over-harvesting, hard clams are declining. There are currently enough hard clams to filter

about one percent of the bay. Water quality declines in the absence of shellfish.

More information is available on DEC's [website](#), which includes permits for shellfish shippers and processors.

Senator Tom O'Mara, Chair of the Senate Standing Committee on Environmental Conservation said, "I thank Governor Cuomo for working with the legislature in establishing this grant program and investing in the growth and success of hatcheries on Long Island. A core strength of our communities and a draw for visitors, these new hatcheries will add to an already robust industry and provide jobs for the hard-working residents of this region. I applaud Governor Cuomo for his commitment to environmental preservation and look forward to its success in expanding and protecting our shellfish populations."

Assemblyman Steve Englebright, Chair of the Assembly Environmental Conservation Committee said, "In order for the Long Island economy to thrive, our residents, communities and environment must thrive, and Governor Cuomo recognizes the importance of protecting our environment, especially our pristine waters. He stood with us when the EPA would not, and he has invested in the modernization and safety of our water infrastructure when it was needed most. Time and time again the Governor has supported our communities, and with today's announcement, we can ensure coastal communities will remain sustainable for generations of New Yorkers."

Suffolk County Executive Steven Bellone said, "Governor Cuomo has delivered once again for Suffolk County as we continue to make progress in the fight to restore our water quality here on Long Island. By making critical funding available, we will have the ability to replenish our shellfish population, support seaweed and shellfish farming, while taking the necessary steps to ensure our water bodies remain sustainable for generations to come. I look forward to the opening of these new hatcheries and the growth in shellfish populations as we work together to remove toxins from our waters and establish a cleaner New York for all."

Nassau County Executive Edward Mangano said, "Clean water is one of the most important components to a thriving economy, healthy residents and vibrant natural resources. With this \$10.4 million effort, Governor Cuomo takes the necessary steps to restore Long Island's coastal waterways, ensuring that they remain clean and safe for future generations. By creating sanctuaries for native shellfish populations to grow, we can ensure the resiliency and viability of Long Island's water for future generations of Long Islanders to cultivate and enjoy."

Town of Oyster Bay Supervisor Joseph S. Saladino said, "Investing in the preservation of Long Island's water quality today is vital to securing a clean and vibrant future for the region's coastal economies and native species. By establishing these sites, we can help restore the shellfish population along Long Island's coast while spurring the economy and protecting the Long Island Sound for future generations of New Yorkers. Governor Cuomo's commitment to investing in water quality in Long Island and beyond is critical to securing a healthier and more prosperous New York for all."

Hempstead Town Supervisor Anthony J. Santino said, "For years, the water surrounding Long Island has declined in quality, resulting in a serious decline in native sea life. By restoring the native shellfish populations and establishing sanctuary sites for these species along Nassau and Suffolk County coasts, we take a major step in improving water quality along these shores for our children and children's children to enjoy. I thank Governor Cuomo

for this major investment in our region's water quality, and look forward to seeing Long Island's local economies thrive."

Huntington Town Supervisor Frank Petrone said, "Preserving and protecting water quality along Long Island's shores is critical to the health of the New Yorkers living there, while also serving as a key component of our coastal economies. By designating sanctuary sites along the Island, we take another step in protecting this region's natural resources. I commend Governor Cuomo for his tireless advocacy for this region's water quality - this funding will help restore Long Island's waterways, ensuring their safety and viability well into the future."

Southampton Town Supervisor Jay Schneiderman said, "Governor Cuomo is an unparalleled advocate for Long Island, and this investment is the latest proof of his commitment. This initiative will help create jobs, support economic growth, and ensure clean water for our communities. I look forward to working with Governor Cuomo to continue to invest in Long Island's economy and environment."

Brookhaven Town Supervisor Ed Romaine said, "Our beaches and waters are exquisite natural treasures and we must do everything we can to preserve and protect them. With this extraordinary investment in restoring shellfish populations, Governor Cuomo joins my administration's efforts for clean water and environmental health as well as job growth in our community. Thank you, Governor Cuomo, for investing in our future."

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