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Governor Cuomo Launches Statewide Water Quality Initiatives

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Governor Also Announces Testing in Northrop Grumman Plume and Comprehensive Long Island Groundwater Study.



Photo by: Kevin P. Coughlin/Office of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo.

Stony Brook, NY - February 18th, 2016 - Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today announced a series of aggressive water quality initiatives to protect both the public health and the environment. The Governor is creating a Statewide Water Quality Rapid Response Team charged with identifying and developing plans to swiftly address critical drinking water contamination concerns, as well as related groundwater and surface water contamination problems. The

Governor is also proposing statewide regulations in the coming days to regulate mulch processing facilities to strengthen oversight and safeguard natural resources.

In addition to these statewide actions, the Governor announced today that the state has begun testing samples from the Northrop Grumman plume on Long Island. The state will also partner with the U.S. Geological Survey to conduct a comprehensive ground water survey to ensure Long Island's drinking water is protected and properly managed.

"Every New Yorker has a fundamental right to clean and safe drinking water," said Governor Cuomo. "Water is a priceless resource that requires the highest levels of protection, and I am proud to continue this administration's legacy of standing up for the environment. We are taking aggressive and proactive steps to ensure clean and healthy communities throughout the state – both for current residents and for generations to come."

The initiatives announced today are outlined below, and also available in the Governor's PowerPoint presentation, [available here](#).

Water Quality Rapid Response Team

The Governor's new statewide Water Quality Rapid Response Team is directed to develop the nation's leading water quality program and prepare a comprehensive action plan to immediately address water quality issues raised by municipalities and concerned citizens, tackling matters ranging from currently regulated contaminants, such as lead, to emerging contaminants, like perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA). The Action Plan will include recommendations to strengthen the state's existing drinking water, groundwater and surface water protection programs. The Team will review and incorporate the best available science and may include new review standards for currently unregulated contaminants, enhanced testing and oversight of drinking water systems, including private wells, and state of the art drinking water treatment options.

Department of Environmental Conservation Acting Commissioner Basil Seggos and Department of Health Commissioner Dr. Howard Zucker will co-chair the Team, which will include the Secretary of State and the Commissioners of Agriculture and Markets, Office of General Services, Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services and Homes and Community Renewal, the Chair of the Public Service Commission, the President of the Empire State Development Corporation and the President and CEO of the Environmental Facilities Corporation.

Issuance of Regulations to Provide Protections to Industries Linked to Potential Ground Water Contamination

The mulch industry is vital to the local economy and environment in communities across the state, but is also currently unregulated, and runoff can endanger local water supplies. At the Governor's direction, next week, the Department of Environmental Conservation will propose for public comment draft regulations for mulch facilities to increase oversight and provide enhanced safeguards. The proposed regulations will require facilities to establish water runoff management plans to protect groundwater and place restrictions on pile size and storage to reduce the risk of fires, odor and dust.

In consultation with the Suffolk County Department of Health Services, DEC will review mulch and compost sites on Long Island to determine if any water quality issues exist from the operation of these facilities and develop appropriate remedial action if necessary.

Northrop Grumman Plume Sampling

Today the Department of Environmental Conservation collected the first samples from six monitoring wells in the Northrop Grumman plume and provided them to an expert lab to conduct a cutting-edge forensic analysis. Specifically, this testing will determine the extent of toxic 1,4-Dioxane contamination in the plume, which was used in airplane manufacturing. This highly specialized compound-specific isotope analysis will allow the state's expert engineers and geologists to fingerprint the source or sources of plume groundwater contamination to inform the remediation strategy.

State testing will be expanded as warranted and results will be shared with the Massapequa Water District and other water districts as soon as they are available. The sampling was made possible after the state ordered Northrop Grumman and the U.S. Navy to open access to monitoring well so samples could be obtained.



Comprehensive Groundwater Study for Long Island

In order to further protect the groundwater resources on Long Island, the Governor will direct \$6 million to study the effective management of this finite resource. The study, which will be done in partnership with the U.S. Geological Survey and Nassau and Suffolk Counties, will examine saltwater intrusion, surface water impacts, contaminant transport and sustainable yield. The result will be a groundwater flow model, the international standard for understanding and managing groundwater impacts.

Department of Environmental Conservation Acting Commissioner Basil Seggos said: "Governor Cuomo has once again demonstrated his national leadership on the environment and public health. I look forward to co-leading the new Team with Commissioner Zucker and developing solutions to improve the quality of New York's drinking,

ground and surface waters. As the Department is comprehensively attacking threats to water quality from nitrogen pollution on Long Island and beyond, we will bolster our efforts by working with leading experts to ensure public health and the environment are fully protected from other harmful waterborne contaminants.”

Department of Health Commissioner Dr. Howard Zucker said: “Providing high quality drinking water is part of the foundation of protecting the public's health. Governor Cuomo's plan to improve the quality of water throughout the state is going to help protect the health and well-being of all New Yorkers by bringing the agencies together, examining the latest science and developing the best policies to safeguard our water supply.”

Senate Majority Leader John J. Flanagan said: “We are blessed in New York State and on Long Island to have the availability of high-quality drinking water, but we also have a responsibility to protect it. At the end of the day, nothing is more important to New Yorkers and their families than the air they breathe and the water they drink. That's why I'm pleased the state is taking the lead in ensuring we have a mechanism in place to respond quickly and efficiently when issues arise so our water is clean and safe, and sustainable for future generations. I thank the Governor and my colleagues in the Senate and Assembly - particularly Senator Ken LaValle and Senator Carl Marcellino - for their work and attention to this important quality-of-life issue.”

Assemblyman Steve Englebright said: “Creating an agenda to safeguard the quality of Long Island's water source is great news - not only for the health of New Yorkers - but for the environment as well. Governor Cuomo's work to ensure that every New Yorker has access to safe, clean drinking water is a testament to his commitment to statewide public health. The implementation of a Water Quality Rapid Response Team is a proactive way to protect the environment from harmful water contamination and keep New Yorker's drinking water clean and safe. I applaud the Governor's dedication to the health and safety of New Yorkers.

Assemblywoman Michelle Schimel said: “Today Governor Cuomo and NY State has launched the campaign to protect Long Island's drinking water for generations to come. The proposed \$6 million groundwater study to be conducted by USGS will drive the science into policy – and that is the most effective means to craft policy.”

Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone said: “It's imperative that we all work together at the local, state and federal levels to protect the public health. The actions that Governor Cuomo has announced today are demonstrating unequivocally that New York is taking proactive measures to not just meet that standard, but to really raise the bar on the protection of water quality. Together with the state, we will take every step to regulate and address environmental pollution wherever it occurs, and ultimately ensure safe drinking water for all Long Islanders.”

Nassau County Executive Ed Mangano said: “Clean water is a fundamental right and I applaud Governor Cuomo for taking such bold action to ensure New York continues to lead the nation in providing access to safe, clean, drinkable water on Long Island. Together, these new measures will ensure that New York's water quality is not only exemplary, but the best in the nation.”

Eric Goldstein, Senior Attorney for the Natural Resources Defense Council, said: “Every New Yorker from Long Island to Niagara Falls has a right to safe and reliable drinking water. We welcome the actions Gov. Cuomo is announcing today, which should bring us closer to fulfilling this promise for residents across the state.”

Marcia Bystryn, President of the New York League of Conservation Voters said: “Water quality issues are on everyone's mind statewide from Hoosick Falls to Bethpage and towns across the Long Island Sound. All New Yorkers deserve clean water but solving this pressing challenge will take a combination of federal, state, and local action. We applaud Governor Cuomo for doing his part. These measures will significantly improve testing, oversight, and lead to

more sustainable management of our groundwater and drinking water systems."

Adrienne Esposito, Executive Director of the Citizens Campaign for the Environment, said: "Individually each of these announcements are critically important. Collectively this is a holistic approach and a game changer for the protection and sustainability of our water supply. Water resources have been neglected for too long. This signifies a new prioritization of water protection which is woefully needed and joyfully accepted! On the behalf of our 80,000 members we are thankful to Governor Cuomo."

Nancy Kelley, Executive Director of The Nature Conservancy on Long Island, said: "The Nature Conservancy applauds Governor Cuomo for his continued commitment to conserving New York's water – one of our most critical resources. Long Island's economy, quality of life, public health and environment are inextricably linked to our water, and a comprehensive study of our aquifer and threats to water quality will allow us to build on work underway to address nitrogen pollution, and develop a full suite of solutions to achieve sustainability for future generations. We look forward to continuing our work with the state, local governments, and many other partners on water quality issues here on Long Island and throughout New York."

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