



New wastewater system at Suffolk park to combat nitrogen

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By Will James



Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone announced on Thursday, Dec. 3, 2015, in Hampton Bays, that an advanced wastewater treatment system will be installed at Meschutt Beach County Park by June 2016. (Credit: Gordon M. Grant)

Suffolk officials will install a high-tech wastewater treatment system at Meschutt Beach County Park in Hampton Bays to remove nitrogen from waste before it pollutes nearby Peconic Bay, County Executive Steve Bellone said Thursday.

Bellone said the technology, the first of its kind to be installed at a Suffolk facility, is central to a countywide campaign to reverse decades of decline in water quality attributed to nitrogen from wastewater and fertilizers.

Suffolk officials are testing 19 similar systems at homes across the county as they prepare to approve them for wider use. Fifteen of the pilot systems have been installed, and four are awaiting installation. The Suffolk health department could approve the technology by late 2016, a county spokeswoman said.

“This is a massive undertaking that we’re engaged in,” Bellone said at a news conference at Meschutt with county and East End officials.

Bellone on Thursday also signed into law a bill requiring Suffolk officials to “lead by example” and upgrade other failing septic systems at county parks that lie in “priority areas” for wastewater concerns. Suffolk lawmakers passed the bill 17-0 on Tuesday.

The Meschutt system will be installed before June to replace a failing system that lacks a septic tank or grease trap, despite the busy Meschutt Beach Hut restaurant operating at the park, Suffolk officials said. The project is estimated to cost \$300,000.

P.W. Grosser Consulting, a Bohemia-based environmental engineering firm, was selected to design the system at a cost of \$47,000. The Meschutt system, located on the waterfront, will be “designed to ensure coastal resilience and guard against sea-level rise,” Bellone said.

Bellone has made sewer expansion and septic upgrades a central part of his environmental agenda in Suffolk, where 70 percent of residents lack sewer connections and the resulting nitrogen pollution has been blamed by scientists for contributing to algal blooms. Suffolk secured \$388 million in state and federal aid this year to extend sewers to 12,000 homes on the South Shore.

County officials have said advanced on-site systems, such as the one planned for Meschutt, are needed to reduce nitrogen pollution on the East End, where

widespread use of sewers is not thought to be cost effective due to low populations.

“We are in a crisis period with regard to our water quality, and at the same time we are in a very, very exciting crossroads in terms of addressing that crisis,” Southampton Town Councilwoman Bridget Fleming, who was elected to the county legislature Nov. 3, said Thursday.

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