

SENATOR KEN LAVALLE: BUDGET INCLUDES RECORD STATE FUNDING TO PROTECT OUR ENVIRONMENT

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Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) Increased To \$300 million; Additional \$200 Million For Water Quality Improvements; Funding For Long Island Pine Barrens Commission And For Fighting Invasive Species, Like The Southern Pine Beetle **[SPECIAL REPORT]**

(Long Island, NY) Senator Ken LaValle announced that the NY State Budget includes record funding to protect our environment. The NYS Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) was increased to \$300 million; the Central Pine Barrens Commission was provided \$1.8 million; plus \$200 million was added to the Water Infrastructure Improvement Act. Funding to combat invasive species, like the Southern Pine Beetle, also increased.

Senator LaValle said, "I am fortunate to represent one of the most beautiful regions of New York State. Throughout my career, I have made it a priority to preserve and protect our fragile environment for this generation and the next. We have been extraordinarily successful increasing support for environmental initiatives over the past year."

He continued, "In December, we were able to provide the East End Towns the opportunity to extend the Community Preservation Fund (CPF) from to 2050, and include water quality measures in their actions.

Now, in the 2016-17 state budget, we increased the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) budget to \$300 million, which is the highest level of funding in the program's history."

The CPF was initiated in 1999 and has protected more than 10,000 acres of land. Along with the Pine Barrens Preservation Law and the Carmen's River Watershed Protection Act, the Community Preservation Fund (CPF) is a mechanism that has enabled us to protect the East End's environmental treasures. Senator LaValle said, "The CPF has been a tremendous success in preserving the lands and natural resources that are critically important for Long Island."

The Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) has been a key source of state aid assisting local communities in undertaking a range of projects from drinking water quality to wetlands protection, from community parks enhancement to recycling programs, and from farmland preservation to controlling invasive

species. Senator LaValle said, “We were able to fund the EPF with an historic high level of \$300 Million this year, which is a substantial increase from the \$177 million in last year’s budget. These funds will go a long way in preserving and protecting the environment.”

Senator LaValle continued, “In the budget, I was also able to secure \$1.8 million for the Long Island Central Pine Barrens Commission, which protects a critical source of drinking water for Long Island. I am proud to have created the commission back in 1993 to protect groundwater, surface water and future drinking water for Long Island residents. The Commission has shown itself to be a tremendous steward of the environment. It is a vital entity that works to ensure the preservation of our lands and the quality of our water every day.”

Eradication of invasive species, like the Southern Pine Beetle, will be funded with a \$12 million budget line. The funds will be distributed via a grant process in coordination with the New York Invasive Species Council. The Council is co-led by the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and the Department of Agriculture and Markets (DAM)

The 2016-2017 NYS Budget includes an additional \$200 million for the NYS Water Infrastructure Improvement Act to assist municipalities in funding water quality infrastructure projects. The grant program was initiated last year offer financial assistance for localities when securing funding for wastewater and drinking water infrastructure projects.

The Water Infrastructure Improvement Act (WIIA) original allocation was \$200 million spread over three fiscal years to fund critical water and wastewater system improvements. With the addition of \$200 million in grant funds in this year’s budget, a program now will have \$425 million available for in direct assistance.