



SUPPORT

S. 5116-C/A. 7850 (Harckham/Englebright)

AN ACT to amend the environmental conservation law, in relation to freshwater wetlands; and to repeal certain provisions of such law relating thereto

The New York League of Conservation Voters supports S. 5116-C/A. 7850 (Harckham/Englebright), which would expand the Department of Environmental Conservation's (DEC) regulatory authority over freshwater wetlands in the state.

Wetlands are some of the most ecologically sensitive and important parts of New York's environment. They serve as natural buffers to protect and recharge drinking water supplies, serve as habitat for diverse and vulnerable species, and provide resiliency against flooding, something that is increasingly important as climate change worsens flooding and extreme weather. However, under current state law DEC only has regulatory authority over freshwater wetlands larger than 12.4 acres that have been formally mapped as wetlands. This unnecessarily restricts the State's ability to protect some of our most valuable lands.

S. 5116-C/A. 7850 would grant DEC the authority to regulate all wetlands smaller than 12.4 acres if they are of unusual importance. Under this regulatory regime, mapping would become a tool for public education rather than a costly, time-consuming race to protect wetlands before they can be developed. NYLCV supports the goal of granting DEC regulatory authority over all wetlands above one acre but is satisfied that granting DEC authority over wetlands of unusual importance that are between one and 12.4 acres would represent a significant, and extremely important, step forward for the state's wetlands protection program.

Protecting freshwater wetlands is one of the most important things New York can do to mitigate the effects of climate change, preserve clean drinking water, and protect vulnerable species. For these reasons, the New York League of Conservation Voters strongly urges passage of S. 5116-C/A. 7850.

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