STATE OF NEW YORK

4533

2025-2026 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

February 6, 2025

Introduced by Sens. SKOUFIS, ADDABBO, MAY -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Environmental Conservation

AN ACT to amend the environmental conservation law, in relation to the water resources planning council

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

Section 1. Section 15-2901 of the environmental conservation law, as amended by chapter 83 of the laws of 1995, is amended to read as follows:

§ 15-2901. Water resources planning council; organization.

There is hereby established within the department of environmental conservation a water resources planning council. It shall consist of [~~fifteen~~] **seventeen voting** members[~~, including~~] **and eight non-voting members. (a) Voting members shall include the chair,** the commissioners of agriculture and markets, economic development, environmental conservation, health, transportation, **human rights,** the chair of the public service commission, president of the New York state energy research and development authority, secretary of state and seven members to be appointed by the governor including at least [~~one member~~] **two members** who shall have expertise in the science of water resources planning [~~and~~]**,** at least **two members who shall have expertise in environmental science and/or engineering and** one member [~~selected from a list proposed by public interest or environmental citizens organizations~~] **who shall have expertise in environmental justice**. These seven members **appointed by the governor** shall serve terms of [~~four~~] **five** years each. Two of the members **appointed by the governor** shall be appointed upon the recommendation of the majority leader of the senate and two of the members **appointed by the governor** shall be appointed upon the recommendation of the speaker of the assembly. [~~The governor shall select a chair from among the members.~~] **(b) Non-voting members shall represent each of the**

EXPLANATION--Matter in *italics* (underscored) is new; matter in brackets [-] is old law to be omitted.

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following regions: 1. New York City; 2. Long Island; 3. Lower Hudson Valley; 4. Capitol Region; 5. Upper Hudson and St. Lawrence River Watershed; 6. Central New York; 7. Southern Tier River basins; and 8. Great Lakes Regional Watersheds. Meetings of the council shall be called by the chair. Members shall receive reimbursement for expenses only.

§ 2. Section 15-2903 of the environmental conservation law, as amended by chapter 307 of the laws of 1986, is amended to read as follows:

§ 15-2903. Water resources planning council; quorum, bylaws.

A majority of the voting members of the council shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of any business or the exercise of any power of the council. The commissioners of agriculture and markets, [~~commerce~~] economic development, energy, environmental conservation, health, transportation, human rights, the [~~chairman~~] chair of the public service commission and secretary of state may, by official authority filed in their respective agencies, and with the water resources planning council, designate a deputy or other officer to exercise [~~his~~] their respective powers and perform [~~his~~] their respective duties, including the right to vote, on the council. The council may also establish for itself bylaws for the conduct of its affairs.

§ 3. The environmental conservation law is amended by adding a new section 15-2904 to read as follows:

§ 15-2904. Water resources planning council; duties and purpose.

(a) The council shall make recommendations regarding the management and oversight of the water resources of the state including facilitating cooperative and sustainable management of water resources to ensure that all residents have access to adequate, affordable, safe drinking water in perpetuity. The council shall also make recommendations to help ensure the fair and equitable distribution of public water resources and shall help ensure that every agency considers environmental justice standards in its water-related decision making process and actions. The council shall create interstate partnerships for sharing resources and best practices for water management.

(b) The council shall review and examine all state and federal laws and regulations concerning the management, use, protection, conservation and provision of water which may affect the state. The council may issue comments on any proposed state and federal legislation or regulations affecting water. The council shall review and may issue comments on any recommendations of the drinking water quality council established pursuant to section eleven hundred thirteen of the public health law. The council shall review the list of contaminants which are tested in waters of the state, including in remedial programs, and may make recommendations to the department of environmental conservation, the department of health, or the United States environmental protection agency.

§ 4. Section 15-2905 of the environmental conservation law, as added by chapter 509 of the laws of 1984, is amended to read as follows:

§ 15-2905. Statewide inventory of existing significant deficiencies in water supply systems.

The commissioner, in consultation with the commissioner of health and the chair, utilizing information requested from the responsible local officials as well as relevant information developed through titles eleven and thirteen of this article, shall cause to be prepared an inventory of existing significant deficiencies in water supply availability throughout the state, including specific needs for improvement, rehabilitation and establishment of water supply, distribution and transmission facilities. Such inventory shall also identify those water supply systems affected or threatened by intrusions of hazardous materials or

wastes and the nature of remediation required. Such inventory shall be completed and transmitted to the governor, legislature and the council by July first, [~~nineteen hundred eighty-five~~] two thousand twenty-seven.

The commissioner in consultation with the secretary of state[~~,~~] and the chair, shall also cause to be prepared a review and summary of existing statutory and constitutional provisions relating to the provision and financing of water supply facilities by local governments, including such provision and financing through inter-local cooperation. Such review and summary shall also identify any existing statutory and constitutional constraints against the effective and efficient provision of sound financing, on a revenue or general obligation basis, of such facilities. Such review and summary shall be completed and transmitted to the governor, legislature and the council by January first, [~~nineteen hundred eighty-six~~] two thousand twenty-seven. At such time and based upon the above inventory and review and summary, the commissioner, in consultation with the chair, shall also cause to be prepared a compilation of those instances in which correction of existing significant deficiencies appears to be beyond the reasonable financial capabilities of the affected communities.

§ 5. Section 15-2907 of the environmental conservation law, as amended by chapter 214 of the laws of 1991, is amended to read as follows:

§ 15-2907. Water resources management strategy; development purpose.

Not later than January first, [~~nineteen hundred eighty-seven~~] two thousand twenty-eight, and every five years thereafter, the department of environmental conservation, with the participation of the department of health and whenever possible, [~~regional planning and development boards~~] non-voting regional members, shall develop and submit a [~~complete~~] comprehensive statewide water resources management strategy to the water resources planning council for its review and adoption following public hearings. [~~This~~] The water resources management strategy shall be composed of substate water resources management strategies which recognize the natural boundaries of the water resource basins, watersheds, and aquifers and existing significant deficiencies of water supply, and which organize these in the most practical and manageable manner. Each substate management strategy shall analyze the present and future demographic, natural resource, economic development, water quality, and conservation requirements of public and private water systems and develop regional management strategies to meet the water resources requirements of residential, agricultural, industrial and commercial users as well as assure the highest possible quality and quantity of these resources.

Strategies shall analyze the efficiency and capacity of existing water supply sources and facilities and shall contain recommendations for appropriate modifications, restoration, and expansion or development of new sources or facilities. Such strategies shall also include evaluations and recommendations as to the feasibility of including or removing hydroelectric energy generation facilities as part of the modifications, restoration, and expansion or development of new or existing resources or facilities and/or returning rivers and streams to their natural flow. The strategy shall also contain recommendations regarding implementation of these strategies by the department of health, the department of environmental conservation, other appropriate state agencies, local governments and special districts. Where appropriate, the strategy shall include review and assessment of all interstate water management agreements or agreements with municipalities. In addition, the departments shall submit to the council substate water resources

management strategies as soon as such strategies are developed. The departments shall also report regularly to the council on the development of the strategies and receive the council's recommendations and directions. [~~Such substate~~] **The statewide water resources management strategy shall be made available to the public on the council's website and submitted to the legislature within two weeks of its adoption. Substate** strategies shall also be available [~~for public inspection as soon as~~] **to the public on each department's and the council's website within two weeks of the submission of** such strategies [~~are developed~~] **to the council**.

§ 6. Section 15-2909 of the environmental conservation law, as added by chapter 509 of the laws of 1984, is amended to read as follows:

§ 15-2909. Water resources management strategy; hearings.

Upon [~~receipt~~] **adoption** of the **comprehensive** statewide water resources management strategy [~~from the department of environmental conservation~~] **by the water resources planning council**, the council shall promptly publish once a week for three consecutive weeks in newspapers of general circulation **and post on the department's website** notice of public hearings thereon. Public hearings shall be conducted in each of the [~~substate areas~~] **regions** represented [~~in the statewide strategy~~] **by a non-voting member of the council**, and shall be in accordance with regulations adopted by the department, subject to modification by the council. Such regulations shall, at a minimum, require a hearing on the record with sworn witnesses and shall afford interested parties a reasonable opportunity to sponsor witnesses and to question witnesses sponsored by others, including department staff, consistent with the need to conclude the hearings expeditiously so that a state water resources management strategy can be adopted in a timely manner. The hearings shall not be considered part of an adjudicatory proceeding, as defined in subdivision three of section one hundred two of the state administrative procedure act, or as part of a rule-making proceeding held under subdivision one of section two hundred two of such act.

§ 7. Section 15-2911 of the environmental conservation law, as added by chapter 509 of the laws of 1984, is amended to read as follows:

§ 15-2911. Water resources management strategy; approval.

The water resources planning council shall, as expeditiously as practicable following the conclusion of its hearings, but in no case later than January first, [~~nineteen hundred eighty-eight~~] **two thousand twenty-eight**, determine, based on the record, **including public comments and hearing testimony,** whether the statewide water resources management strategy should be approved with modifications or disapproved, and shall state in writing the reasons for its determination. If the council has determined approval of the strategy, it shall be adopted by the departments of health and environmental conservation and other appropriate state agencies in the form determined by the council. If the council has determined disapproval of the strategy, the department of environmental conservation, in conjunction with the department of health, shall modify the strategy in accordance with the determination issued by the council and resubmit the strategy to the council for its action.

§ 8. Section 15-2913 of the environmental conservation law, as added by chapter 509 of the laws of 1984, is amended to read as follows:

§ 15-2913. Water resources management strategy; revision.

From time to time and at least once every [~~two years~~] **year**, [~~the department of environmental conservation, with the participation of the department of health~~] **the water resources planning council, with participation of all voting members** and whenever possible, [~~regional planning~~

~~and development boards~~] non-voting regional members, shall review the strategy and shall either (a) [~~prepare any~~] recommend amendments necessary to update the strategy, or (b) issue a determination that no amendments are necessary and the reasons supporting the determination. Any interested person may seek such a review upon written application to the department of environmental conservation for an amendment to the statewide water resources management strategy. [~~Any statement issued by the departments that no amendments are necessary shall be submitted to the council for approval, modification or disapproval.~~] Amendments shall be adopted in the same manner as the strategy itself. Every five years, a new comprehensive statewide resources management strategy shall be developed and adopted by the water resources planning council as set forth herein.

§ 9. The environmental conservation law is amended by adding a new section 15-2915 to read as follows:

§ 15-2915. Report to legislature and governor.

The water resources planning council shall annually submit a report to the governor and the legislature on the status and quality of the water resources of the state.

§ 10. This act shall take effect on the ninetieth day after it shall have become a law. Effective immediately, the addition, amendment and/or repeal of any rule or regulation necessary for the implementation of this act on its effective date are authorized to be made and completed on or before such effective date.