

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:

1 Section 1. Section 15-2901 of the environmental conservation law, as
2 amended by chapter 83 of the laws of 1995, is amended to read as
3 follows:
4 § 15-2901. Water resources planning council; organization.
5 There is hereby established within the department of environmental
6 conservation a water resources planning council. It shall consist of
7 [~~fifteen~~] seventeen voting members [~~, including~~] and eight non-voting
8 members. (a) Voting members shall include the chair, the commissioners
9 of agriculture and markets, economic development, environmental conser-
10 vation, health, transportation, human rights, the chair of the public
11 service commission, president of the New York state energy research and
12 development authority, secretary of state and seven members to be
13 appointed by the governor including at least [~~one member~~] two members
14 who shall have expertise in the science of water resources planning
15 [~~and~~], at least two members who shall have expertise in environmental
16 science and/or engineering and one member [~~selected from a list proposed~~
17 ~~by public interest or environmental citizens organizations~~] who shall
18 have expertise in environmental justice. These seven members appointed
19 by the governor shall serve terms of [~~four~~] five years each. Two of the
20 members appointed by the governor shall be appointed upon the recommen-
21 dation of the majority leader of the senate and two of the members
22 appointed by the governor shall be appointed upon the recommendation of
23 the speaker of the assembly. [~~The governor shall select a chair from~~
24 ~~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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1 following regions: 1. New York City; 2. Long Island; 3. Lower Hudson
2 Valley; 4. Capitol Region; 5. Upper Hudson and St. Lawrence River
3 Watershed; 6. Central New York; 7. Southern Tier River basins; and 8.
4 Great Lakes Regional Watersheds. Meetings of the council shall be called
5 by the chair. Members shall receive reimbursement for expenses only.

6 § 2. Section 15-2903 of the environmental conservation law, as amended
7 by chapter 307 of the laws of 1986, is amended to read as follows:
8 § 15-2903. Water resources planning council; quorum, bylaws.

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

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

22 § 15-2904. Water resources planning council; duties and purpose.

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

33 (b) The council shall review and examine all state and federal laws
34 and regulations concerning the management, use, protection, conservation
35 and provision of water which may affect the state. The council may issue
36 comments on any proposed state and federal legislation or regulations
37 affecting water. The council shall review and may issue comments on any
38 recommendations of the drinking water quality council established pursu-
39 ant to section eleven hundred thirteen of the public health law. The
40 council shall review the list of contaminants which are tested in waters
41 of the state, including in remedial programs, and may make recommenda-
42 tions to the department of environmental conservation, the department of
43 health, or the United States environmental protection agency.

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

46 § 15-2905. Statewide inventory of existing significant deficiencies in
47 water supply systems.

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

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

4 The commissioner in consultation with the secretary of state^[7] and
5 the chair, shall also cause to be prepared a review and summary of
6 existing statutory and constitutional provisions relating to the
7 provision and financing of water supply facilities by local governments,
8 including such provision and financing through inter-local cooperation.
9 Such review and summary shall also identify any existing statutory and
10 constitutional constraints against the effective and efficient provision
11 of sound financing, on a revenue or general obligation basis, of such
12 facilities. Such review and summary shall be completed and transmitted
13 to the governor, legislature and the council by January first, [~~nineteen~~
14 ~~hundred eighty six~~] two thousand twenty-seven. At such time and based
15 upon the above inventory and review and summary, the commissioner, in
16 consultation with the chair, shall also cause to be prepared a compila-
17 tion of those instances in which correction of existing significant
18 deficiencies appears to be beyond the reasonable financial capabilities
19 of the affected communities.

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

22 § 15-2907. Water resources management strategy; development purpose.

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

42 Strategies shall analyze the efficiency and capacity of existing water
43 supply sources and facilities and shall contain recommendations for
44 appropriate modifications, restoration, and expansion or development of
45 new sources or facilities. Such strategies shall also include evalu-
46 ations and recommendations as to the feasibility of including or remov-
47 ing hydroelectric energy generation facilities as part of the modifica-
48 tions, restoration, and expansion or development of new or existing
49 resources or facilities and/or returning rivers and streams to their
50 natural flow. The strategy shall also contain recommendations regarding
51 implementation of these strategies by the department of health, the
52 department of environmental conservation, other appropriate state agen-
53 cies, local governments and special districts. Where appropriate, the
54 strategy shall include review and assessment of all interstate water
55 management agreements or agreements with municipalities. In addition,
56 the departments shall submit to the council substate water resources

1 management strategies as soon as such strategies are developed. The
2 departments shall also report regularly to the council on the develop-
3 ment of the strategies and receive the council's recommendations and
4 directions. [~~Such substate~~] The statewide water resources management
5 strategy shall be made available to the public on the council's website
6 and submitted to the legislature within two weeks of its adoption.
7 Substate strategies shall also be available [~~for public inspection as~~
8 ~~soon as~~] to the public on each department's and the council's website
9 within two weeks of the submission of such strategies [~~are developed~~] to
10 the council.

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

13 § 15-2909. Water resources management strategy; hearings.

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

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

35 § 15-2911. Water resources management strategy; approval.

36 The water resources planning council shall, as expeditiously as prac-
37 ticable following the conclusion of its hearings, but in no case later
38 than January first, [~~nineteen hundred eighty eight~~] two thousand twen-
39 ty-eight, determine, based on the record, including public comments and
40 hearing testimony, whether the statewide water resources management
41 strategy should be approved with modifications or disapproved, and shall
42 state in writing the reasons for its determination. If the council has
43 determined approval of the strategy, it shall be adopted by the depart-
44 ments of health and environmental conservation and other appropriate
45 state agencies in the form determined by the council. If the council has
46 determined disapproval of the strategy, the department of environmental
47 conservation, in conjunction with the department of health, shall modify
48 the strategy in accordance with the determination issued by the council
49 and resubmit the strategy to the council for its action.

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

52 § 15-2913. Water resources management strategy; revision.

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

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

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

16 § 15-2915. Report to legislature and governor.

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

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