STATE OF NEW YORK

6421--A

2021-2022 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

April 27, 2021

Introduced by Sen. HINCHEY -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Environmental Conservation -- recommitted to the Committee on Environmental Conservation in accordance with Senate Rule 6, sec. 8 -- committee discharged, bill amended, ordered reprinted as amended and recommitted to said committee

AN ACT to amend the environmental conservation law, in relation to establishing the position of Catskill park coordinator within the department of environmental conservation

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

Section 1. The New York City Watershed Agreement, the Public Access Plan, the Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act and other department of environmental conservation programs in the Catskills all have a common interest in community development, land acquisition and recreational access, concern for the abundance and purity of water, and coordination with other department of environmental conservation activities within the watershed. The department of environmental conservation watershed coordinator is responsible for the monumental task of overseeing the implementation of all state partnership programs embodied in the 1997 New York City Watershed Agreement. The new Catskill park coordinator position would complement the role of the watershed coordinator by integrating those activities directly related to the watershed agreement with all other department of environmental conservation program interests and by advocating for the best interests of the Catskill park. The benefit of a Catskill Park Preserve Advocate has been successfully demonstrated in the Hudson River estuary, Adirondacks, and Salmon River corridor; a similar position will ensure integration and balance in the department of environmental conservation's current and future initiatives affecting the natural, social and economic resources in the Catskill Region.

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

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§ 2. The environmental conservation law is amended by adding a new section 9-0115 to read as follows:

§ 9-0115. Catskill park coordinator.

1. The commissioner shall maintain in the department the position of Catskill park coordinator to assist the commissioner in the development and implementation of the public access plan for the Catskill park. The commissioner shall fix his or her compensation within the amounts appropriated therefor and prescribe his or her powers and duties, which shall be in addition to those contained in this section. The Catskill park coordinator shall build partnerships between the department and other state agencies, municipal governments, businesses and nonprofit entities that will develop a community-based tourism strategy for the forest preserve to help fortify the regional economy by scheduling and organizing forums and following up on future recommendations, actions, or concerns raised at such forums.

2. Duties of the Catskill park coordinator shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

a. coordinating implementation of the public access plan and other approved or adopted Catskill park-wide plans with all public and private stakeholders;

b. enhancing the ability of the department to respond to the needs of the public on a timely basis;

c. coordinating complex management issues and facilitating improved communication between programs within regions three and four of the department and between those regions and the central offices of the department;

d. seeking funding for and tracking implementation of the public access plan, unit management plans, and other approved and adopted Catskill park-wide plans;

e. providing continuity with future planning within the department and other state agencies, including, but not limited to, the Catskill association for tourism services;

f. maintaining a tracking system for department program activities, including facility development and resource management plan preparation and implementation for the Catskill region; and

g. providing for improved communications between the department and the public and building constituency support for departmental initiatives that benefit the Catskill region.

§ 3. This act shall take effect on the first of April next succeeding the date upon which it shall have become a law.