

STATE OF NEW YORK

2808

2023-2024 Regular Sessions

IN ASSEMBLY

January 27, 2023

Introduced by M. of A. PHEFFER AMATO -- read once and referred to the
Committee on Environmental Conservation

AN ACT to amend the environmental conservation law, in relation to
prohibiting the filling of borrow pits in Jamaica Bay

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

1 Section 1. Legislative intent. Due to the increase in vessel size in
2 recent years, New York State waterways such as channels, berthing areas
3 and harbors are being excavated in a process known as dredging to main-
4 tain sufficient depth for safe and efficient vessel operation.

5 Dredged material is naturally accumulated sediment, much of the
6 dredged material does contain some contaminants at varying concen-
7 trations.

8 Jamaica Bay was dredged to supply soil for a number of construction
9 projects. This process created borrow pits in the bay. These borrow pits
10 have been identified as an attractive alternative for the disposing of
11 dredge material.

12 Over the years local stakeholders, environmentalists and the fishing
13 community have noted that while the borrow pits were man-made and a
14 byproduct of former construction/dredging projects, they have contrib-
15 uted immensely to the health of the water quality of Jamaica Bay. It is
16 currently recognized that we have the cleanest water quality in over one
17 hundred years, tremendous fish populations and even the return of large
18 marine mammals such as seals, dolphins and even the occasional whale.
19 These groups identify the dredged areas of the bay referred to as borrow
20 pits as one of the key reasons for this abundant marine life. In addi-
21 tion to hosting massive schools of fish, these deep borrow pits act as
22 "heat sinks" working to absorb temperatures and helping to keep the
23 water temperatures of the bay from spiking to harmful levels. The fill-
24 ing of any of the borrow pits of the bay, or its tributaries, would harm
25 the health of the bay.

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

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1 § 2. Subdivision 1 of section 15-0505 of the environmental conserva-
2 tion law, as amended by chapter 233 of the laws of 1979, is amended to
3 read as follows:

4 1. No person, local public corporation or interstate authority shall
5 excavate or place fill below the mean high water level in any of the
6 navigable waters of the state, or in marshes, estuaries, tidal marshes
7 and wetlands that are adjacent to and contiguous at any point to any of
8 the navigable waters of the state and that are inundated at mean high
9 water level or tide, without a permit issued pursuant to subdivision 3
10 of this section, except that no person, local public corporation or
11 interstate authority shall excavate or place fill in any of the borrow
12 pits of Jamaica Bay or its tributaries at any time. For the purposes of
13 this section, fill shall include, but shall not be limited to, earth,
14 clay, silt, sand, gravel, stone, rock, shale, concrete (whole or frag-
15 mentary), ashes, cinders, slag, metal, dredged material or any other
16 similar material whether or not enclosed or contained by (1) crib work
17 of wood, timber, logs, concrete or metal, (2) bulkheads and cofferdams
18 of timber sheeting, bracing and piling or steel sheet piling or steel H
19 piling, separated or in combination. [~~Nothing contained in this section~~
20 ~~is intended to be, nor shall be construed to limit, impair or affect the~~
21 ~~memorandum of understanding which any state department enters into with~~
22 ~~the Department of Environmental Conservation or the general powers and~~
23 ~~duties of the Department of Transportation relating to canals or the~~
24 ~~general powers and duties of the Department of Environmental Conserva-~~
25 ~~tion relating to flood control.]~~

26 § 3. This act shall take effect immediately.