STATE OF NEW YORK

7854

IN SENATE

January 3, 2024

Introduced by Sen. 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 establishing the New York state cooperative watershed management program

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

Section 1. The environmental conservation law is amended by adding a new section 15-0519 to read as follows:

§ 15-0519. Cooperative watershed management program.

1. There is hereby established within the department a "New York state cooperative watershed management program" for the purpose of providing funding to watershed networks to encourage such watershed networks to form local or regional solutions to address their water and watershed management needs.

2. For the purposes of this section the following terms shall have the following meanings:

(a) "Program" means the New York state cooperative watershed management program established pursuant to subdivision one of this section.

(b) "Watershed network" means a self-sustaining, non-regulatory, consensus-based network that is composed of a diverse array of stakeholders, which may include but shall not be limited to, lake associations and other watershed-related non-profit organizations, municipalities, federal, state, or local agencies, and tribal nations. A "watershed network" may be specific to a defined watershed devoted to one water body or may represent an array of such groups working across connected watersheds in a region. A "watershed network" may be housed within a watershed management council, a lake association, intermunicipal body, or a municipal government, but shall represent a variety of stakeholders in such watershed or region.

(c) "Watershed network development" means activities to develop a watershed network, including, but not limited to, development of bylaws or mission statements, performing stakeholder outreach, pursuing recognition as a nonprofit, or other similar organization activities.

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

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(d) "Watershed network professionalization" means activities to professionalize a watershed network, including, but not limited to, hiring professional staff for watershed management or grant writing, developing watershed restoration plans, or designing watershed management projects.

3. (a) The program shall develop a process whereby watershed networks may apply to the program for grants for watershed network development or watershed network professionalization.

(b) The program shall develop criteria for a competitive award process for approval or denial of grant applications from watershed networks pursuant to paragraph (a) of this subdivision. Such criteria shall include, but not be limited to, the following for approval of a grant application:

(i) The applicant watershed network shall be comprised of two or more public or private stakeholders; and

(ii) The applicant watershed network has demonstrated stakeholder buy-in to the watershed network development or watershed network professionalization plan by submitting a complete budget proposal for such plan, and by submitting letters of support from such stakeholders.

4. (a) A watershed network selected for a watershed network development grant pursuant to this section shall be awarded a grant not to exceed twenty thousand dollars. The same watershed network shall be eligible to receive a watershed network development grant pursuant to this section no more frequently than once every five years.

(b) A watershed network selected for a watershed network professionalization grant pursuant to this section shall be awarded a grant not to exceed forty thousand dollars. The same watershed network shall be eligible to receive a watershed network professionalization grant pursuant to this section annually for up to three consecutive years.

(c) A watershed network shall not be eligible to receive a watershed network development grant and a watershed professionalization grant in the same year.

5. Funds awarded by the program pursuant to this section shall be subject to appropriation therefor by the legislature.

§ 2. This act shall take effect on the sixtieth 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.