



LI Sound Restoration Act passes in U.S. Congress

Staff Report

The Long Island Sound Restoration Act, introduced by Rick Lazio, Nancy Johnson and Sherry Boehlert with cosponsorships from the entire New York and Connecticut congressional delegations, passed the House of Representatives last March, authorizing \$80 million a year to be allocated for the cleanup of Long Island Sound.

These funds would match the hundreds of millions of dollars in state funds from New York and Connecticut already secured for the implementation of the Long Island

Sound Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan. Throughout the summer months, this legislation was not taken up by the U.S. Senate. However, in an end-of-session maneuver, the House leadership sent the Long Island Sound Restoration Act to the conference committee with the Senate to be considered as part of the overall Water Resources Act.

After weeks of negotiation and with time running out, the conference committee reported a compromise that authorized \$40 million a year for Long Island Sound for the next five years. In this year's budget, Long Island Sound appropriations increased from \$1

million to \$5.5 million in federal funds. The leadership of the house, bill sponsors and New York/Connecticut Senate delegations, enabled this legislation to become law.

The Long Island Sound Restoration Act has been a top priority of the Clean Water/Jobs Coalition since its creation in 1992. At the late-October Sound Guardian Award program, which benefits National Audubon, the participants celebrated this victory. Ross Pepe, of the Construction Industry Council of Westchester County and the Hudson Valley and cofounder of the Clean Water/Jobs Coalition, stated that, "Neither labor,

construction or environmental interests could have gotten this bill passed on their own, it's only through our partnership with Audubon and conservation interests that we were able to triumph." (A story about the Sound Guardian Award will be in the next issue of the *Audubon Advocate*.)

David J. Miller of the National Audubon Society of New York State stated at the Sound Guardian Award event, "Our job now is to work together to make sure congress fully appropriates the \$40 million a year allocated for Long Island Sound."



NYS Parks

Legislative Update

Jet Skis Bill OK'd

Staff report

Last June the New York state assembly and senate passed A.8097 and S.5309, bills that authorize cities, towns and villages to regulate the use of personal watercraft and specialty prop-craft, such as jet skis. Local municipalities can now enforce watercraft hours of operation, establish usage zones, and regulate speed and "no wake" speeds. Governor George E. Pataki signed them into law. Sponsors of the bill were Senator Carl L. Marcellino (R-Syosset), chairman of the senate environmental conservation committee, and Assemblyman Thomas P. DiNapoli, chairman of the assembly local government committee.



NYS Assemblyman
Thomas P. DiNapoli



NYS Senator
Carl L. Marcellino

Congress approves important land conservation measure

Audubon DC Staff Report

As the U.S. Congress moved toward adjournment, efforts to pass the Conservation and Reinvestment Act (CARA) suffered a one-two punch, eliminating any chance the bill had to become law this year. In its place the Senate and House passed what has come to be known as the 'CARA-lite' bill. Included in the Interior Appropriations bill was a \$12 billion, six-year funding measure called the Land Conservation, Preservation and Infrastructure Improvement Act. This funding package was included in the bill because appropriations committee members saw the strong support for expanded funding for conservation projects, as evidenced by the support for CARA.

The senate voted 83-13 to approve the conference report to the Interior spending bill, after Senator Mary Landrieu (D-La.) and the leadership were able to come to an agreement on attaching funding for coastal and wildlife conservation programs to other appropriations bills.

Appropriators included a trust fund in the conference report aimed at providing more money for conservation accounts, but maintained their control over its distribution. The move caused consternation among those who wanted to see the broader CARA bill (H.R. 701) enacted. CARA would have set up a 15-year fund to guarantee nearly \$3 billion toward conservation programs each year.

Specifically the wildlife provision in CARA would have provided \$350 million annually to the states mainly for non-game programs. While not included in CARA, two appropriations were made in the amount of \$50 million for one year for these programs.

Landrieu emphasized on the floor that the trust fund is not CARA, but a "minor down-payment," and said she will continue efforts to move that legislation next year.

While not as sweeping as CARA, the new proposal increases the nation's commitment to conservation, increasing funding for land acquisition for open space at the state, local and federal levels. The new measure provides funding rising up to \$2.4 billion for each of the next six years for urban and suburban parks, bicycle paths, and other recreational activities; coast and beach protection; wildlife preservation; national parks and forests expansion; wetlands creation; and historic preservation. House and senate appropriations committee members must allocate funds to these programs each and every year, as the bill mandates that if

the money is not spent on the required conservation programs, it cannot be spent at all.

The new proposal funds six major categories of conservation projects, with about two thirds of it going to states and localities. The money for next year is divided in the following ways - (and if these figures sound high, keep it mind that combined, it amounts to less than 1% of our nation's overall budget for defense):

- \$540 million for federal and state land and water conservation programs, such as land acquisition to protect precious lands from development threats;
- \$400 million for coastal protection programs, such as pollution control programs;
- \$300 million for state conservation programs, such as open space proposals and other state fish and wildlife conservation programs;
- \$160 million for urban and historic preservation programs;
- \$150 million for federal lands maintenance, to help reduce backlogs of maintenance needs in our National Wildlife Refuge System; and
- \$50 million in payments to states in lieu of taxes lost on federally owned lands.

The house approved the conference report with the trust fund by a 348-69 vote. The administration supported the report and praised its increased funding for land and water conservation along with the removal of many riders it deemed harmful to the environment.

The conference report provides \$18.8 billion for Interior and related agencies for FY 2001, which is \$2.5 billion above the administration's request and \$3.9 billion more than the FY 2000 level. Most of the increase can be attributed to nearly \$3 billion in wildfire prevention and rehabilitation funding, including \$1.6 billion in emergency money.

Of the total, \$90.5 million was approved for what is known as stateside funds. Using the Land and Conservation Fund (LWCF) allocation formula, New York state can expect to get just \$4.5 million for parks, recreation and open space projects in FY2001. Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge was also allocated \$2 million from the fund, primarily for new land acquisitions.