Supervisor Mark Lesko and Councilwoman Connie Kepert announce closing of Over 30 Acres on the Carmans River
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Supervisor Lesko announces the Town’s closing on the Lake Grove School property in Yaphank. Pictured left to right are Director of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and Chairman of the Central Pine Barrens Commission Peter Scully, Councilwoman Connie Kepert, State Senator Ken LaValle, Supervisor Lesko, State Senator Lee Zeldin, Assemblyman Dean Murray, Assemblyman Fred Thiele, Jr. and Assemblyman Steve Englebright.

Farmingville, NY - On July 15, Supervisor Mark Lesko and Councilwoman Connie Kepert held a press conference to announce the closing of the Lake Grove School Property, which is within the 0-2 year groundwater contributing area of the Carmans River as identified by the Carmans River Study Group.

"The acquisition of the 30 acre Lake Grove school property is a major victory for land preservation in the precious Carmans River Watershed. This sensitive piece of land will now be forever protected from development," said Supervisor Mark Lesko. "The process to protect the Carmans River has truly been a successful collaboration between many levels of government with environmentalists, builders, community stakeholders and I look forward to continuing to partner with them as we are work towards the completion of the draft Carmans River Protection Plan."

Councilwoman Connie Kepert said, "The Town's acquisition of the Lake Grove School property is a clear indication of how serious we are in our efforts to protect the Carmans River. Preserving this piece of land and others like it along the river will have a positive impact on the local ecology."

State Senator Ken LaValle said, "The preservation of open space protects the quality and character of our region for generations to come and, importantly, further protects our drinking water."

"I am proud to have worked with my colleague, Senator LaValle, on legislation to preserve the Carmans River Watershed. It is important that we partner with localities and our communities to find the right balance to help preserve Long Island's water quality without imposing unfair burdens," said State Senator Lee Zeldin.

Assemblyman Steve Englebright said, "The town is to be congratulated for its vision, foresight and follow through on protecting the water chemistry and beauty of the Carmans River."
Assemblyman Fred W. Thiele, Jr. stated, "The overwhelming momentum and dedication to protecting and restoring the Carmans River watershed is exciting. The creation, and more importantly, implementation of the Carmans River Watershed Protection and Management Plan through this recent acquisition is a great accompaniment to our recently passed State legislation."

"The Lake Grove School property is an important piece in the overall protection of the Carmans River watershed," said Assemblyman Dean Murray, a co-sponsor of the state legislation to protect the Carmans River Watershed. "Working together on so many levels of government, with such a diverse group of stakeholders, we have been able to preserve the quality and character of this community, and our drinking water, for generations to come."

"I am very proud to have been able to cast my vote in support of expanding the core boundaries of our pinebarrens," said First District Assemblyman Daniel P. Losquadro. "Preservation of our natural habitats for future generations, for me, is one of the greatest satisfactions I get as an elected official." "The Lake Grove School parcel is a key picture puzzle part that has now been put in place, aimed at completing an assemblage of properties that will permanently protect this river. Everyone who had a hand in its preservation deserves our thanks and congratulations," said Dick Amper, Executive Director of the Long Island Pine Barrens Society.

"Preserving this sensitive parcel is another step forward in our efforts to protect the Carmans River for future generations," said Peter A. Scully, Regional Director of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, and Chairman of the Central Pine Barrens Commission. "Once again, Supervisor Lesko's leadership is making a big difference in the fight to keep this beautiful river clean." "The acquisition of the Lake Grove School property is a perfect example of the ability of the Town of Brookhaven and property owners to come to a satisfactory arrangement with regard to reducing development within the area near the Carmans River and moving such development opportunities to places within the town which are more suited for such development," said Mitchell H. Pally, Chief Executive Officer of LIBI. "We stand ready to work with everyone to ensure that this acquisition is the first of many examples of the implementation of the entire Carmans River Protection Plan."

The parcel is sandwiched between two public land holdings: Southaven County Park to the west and a 23-acre Town-owned open space property to the east. The western boundary of the property is approximately 1,650 feet from the Carmans River. The property is adjacent to the boundary of the Core Preservation Area of the Central Pine Barrens, although the property could be developed because it is zoned L-1 (light industrial). The purchase price of the property was $4,150,000.

Given its acreage, this property recharges an estimated 50,000 gallons of clean water on a daily basis, which equates to about 17,851,000 gallons annually, which in a short time frame discharges into the river. Acquisition would eliminate the possibility of discharging harmful pollutants into the river.

The Lake Grove School property is extensively forested, composed of woody species typical to pine barrens upland habitats, including pitch pine, scarlet, black, and white oaks, and red maple. A number of wildlife species adapted to forested habitats utilize the property, including a large number of birds, reptiles, and numerous small and medium-sized mammal species. An active fox den is situated on the property.

On February 10, 2011 Supervisor Mark Lesko received the draft Carmans River Watershed Protection and Management Plan, the culmination of over three months of work by the Carmans River Study Group. The Carmans River Study Group was established by Supervisor Lesko in October 2010 so the Town would have a clear plan of action to protect the Carmans River that was agreed-upon by government, non-government organizations and environmentalists, and builders. The Protection Plan is arguably the most significant and productive partnership between government, environmentalists, and builders since the Pine Barrens Act of 1993.

The Carmans River Study Group held a roundtable discussion on March 23, 2011 to answer questions about the Protection Plan. At the Town Board meeting on March 29, 2011, the Board had an opportunity to hear from the public about their views on the Carmans River Protection Plan.

On June 17, 2011, the New York State Legislature unanimously passed legislation (S. 5663 and A. 8265) to amend the New York State Environmental Conservation Law and support the Town of Brookhaven in enacting a Carmans River Watershed Protection Plan by incorporating defined parcels in the Carmans River Watershed into core area of
The Central Pine Barrens. The State legislation also supports the various mechanisms to achieve the goals of the Carmans River Watershed Protection Plan, including the transfer of development rights, multi-family districts to serve as receiving areas for transfer of development rights, and the cooperation and participation of the Central Pine Barrens and Joint Planning and Policy Commission.

The Town Board formed a subcommittee that is examining all of the comments received on the Plan and working on a Protection Plan that will be presented to the Town Board for adoption.

The Carmans River is ten miles long and is located in the Central Long Island Pine Barrens Region, which is publicly protected and managed land. Sections of the Carmans River are designated by New York State as a Wild, Scenic, and Recreational river and a New York State Significant Coastal Fish and Wildlife Habitat. The Carmans River and the Peconic River are Long Island's only rivers in the Pine Barrens Region and two of Long Island's four major Rivers. The other two are the Nissequoque and the Connetquot Rivers. The headwaters of the Carmans River are in Middle Island and it descends to Shirley.