

# Brookhaven Town Board Passes Home Rule Message in Support of New York State Legislation to Protect the Carmans River

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**Farmingville, NY** - At the June 14 Town Board Meeting, the Town Board unanimously approved a home rule message in support of New York State Senate Bill S. 5663 and New York State Assembly Bill A. 8265, which will enact various measures to protect the Carmans River Watershed if passed by the State Legislature and signed into law, including expanding the core preservation area of the Central Pine Barrens.

"I thank the State Senators and Assembly members for their leadership in bringing us one step closer to protecting the Carmans River in perpetuity," said Supervisor Mark Lesko, "the effort to protect the Carmans River Watershed has certainly been a successful partnership between many different levels of government and interested groups."

"I thank our state representatives for taking steps to protect the Carmans River. The Carmans River Watershed is one of the most important natural assets on Long Island and by working together collectively to protect it we can keep it pure and pristine," said Deputy Supervisor and Councilwoman Kathleen Walsh.

"I support the preservation of the Carmans River Watershed and am pleased this home rule message received unanimous support," said Councilwoman Connie Kepert. "Over the next nine months I look forward to adopting a document everyone can feel good about, including the land preservationists, land owners, and residents of the watershed."

"I commend Senators LaValle and Zeldin for insisting that the message come from the bottom up in the form of a local government message to Albany," commented Brookhaven Town Councilman Dan Panico. "It is now incumbent on all of the stakeholders in this working group to create a plan that not only serves to protect the Carmans River, but also balances the possible transfer of development from the watershed to designated receiving areas throughout Brookhaven Town."

"I am a firm believer in home rule and that laws impacting local residents should come from the local government. This approval is the next step in the process in advancing the Carmans River Plan," said Senator Ken LaValle.

"Now that the Town of Brookhaven has sent us the necessary home rule message, it is important for the state legislature to be responsive in assisting the Town to protect the Carmans River," said State Senator Zeldin.

"I am pleased that the Town of Brookhaven is supporting this initiative to protect the environmental integrity of the Carmans River watershed," stated Assemblyman Fred Thiele. "This is an integral step in preserving the delicate balance between environmental protection and economic development of the watershed."

State Assemblyman Steve Engelbright said, "As a surface expression of the pristine water table that underlies the Central Pine Barrens and one of the most biologically diverse waterways in New York State, the Carmans River is a nationally significant natural treasure worthy of our best efforts at preservation. That is what this important planning initiative is about. I am delighted with Brookhaven Town's home rule message in support of enabling state legislation because it sets the stage for new law that is good news for our town, its environment, and people."

"This legislation is the first step in an important process of preserving the Carmans River for future generations of Long Islanders," said Assemblyman Dan Losquadro. "I look forward to working with Senator LaValle, environmental groups, local governments, and civic groups to ensure the proper management of this local treasure."

"The cooperation between the town and the state is essential to our completing this landmark legislation. Godspeed!" said Richard Amper, Executive Director, Long Island Pine Barrens Society. Kevin McDonald, Director of Public Policy and Public Finance for the Nature Conservancy said, "Protecting an additional 1100 acres of Pine Barrens around the Carmans River Watershed is a critical step to protecting and restoring this important river. We have more work to do for sure, but this is an important measure. The town board is to be complimented for taking this important action."

"The Long Island Builders Institute strongly supports the efforts of the Brookhaven Town Board and the members of

the State Legislature to pass the necessary enabling legislation to move the Carmans River Watershed Plan forward," said Mitchell H. Pally, Chief Executive Officer. "LIBI looks forward to working with all of the appropriate parties to ensure that the remaining steps are taken which will lead to the successful movement of development out of the area near the Carmans River to places along our main highways where such development is centrally located."

New York State Legislative Bills S. 5663 and A. 8265 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.

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 Protection Plan includes sweeping recommendations to protect the river and preserve land and introduces a new model of land preservation and management by redirecting development away from virgin land. The report was unanimously approved by the Carmans River Study Group at their last meeting on February 9. A public hearing was held on March 29, 2011 and the Town can adopt it after the Draft Environmental Impact Statement is prepared.

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.

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