



Assemblyman

Steve Otis



91st Assembly District

Larchmont - Mamaroneck - New Rochelle - Port Chester - Rye Brook and Rye

October 6, 2023

Dear Friends,

A busy fall season has included several events and celebrations in communities across the Sound Shore. Every community I represent was impacted by the extreme rainfall and flooding experienced last week. We can be thankful that communities bounced back faster than after past storms, but the impacts were real. A major priority of mine continues to be to work with local governments to identify, accelerate, and help secure funding to support action on needed flood mitigation and resiliency projects. I have included resources on how families in need of recovery assistance can seek help.

This newsletter includes information on the legislation Governor Hochul signed that I sponsored along with Senator Shelley Mayer to encourage 'Living Shoreline' projects that use natural buffer zones on our coastal communities. This is one tool that can be used to reduce the impact of flooding.

This newsletter also includes information on innovative programs to reduce garbage through reuse rather than disposal. I visited programs upstate as part of a statewide conservation commission conference.

Below you will find:

- Living Shorelines legislation signed
- Reuse programs to divert waste to landfills and incineration
- Supported UAW workers on the picket-line
- Help for families affected by flood damage
- October Free College Application Month
- Free Covid tests available

As always, do not hesitate to contact me or my staff on issues in this e-mail or any matter in which I can be helpful. My office number is 914-939-7028.

Warm regards,

Living Shorelines Legislation Signed into Law



This week, Senator Mayer and I held a press conference to announce that the “Living Shorelines” legislation we sponsored ([S.5186A/A.5221A](#)) has been [signed into law by Governor Kathy Hochul](#). This legislation will require the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to encourage the use of nature-based solutions as the preferred approach for stabilizing tidal shorelines in the oversight and regulatory decisions of the agency.

Communities across New York State face intensifying climate change related hazards, including dangerous floods. Hurricane Ida devastated communities and homes across New York, particularly those along the Sound Shore communities. Seventeen New Yorkers lost their lives, and the storm caused \$7.5 billion in damages, including damages to 11,000 homes and many roads. While less devastating, last week's storm underscored our vulnerability. As storms become more frequent, intense, and dangerous due to climate change, our communities become more vulnerable to these threats. Nature-based

solutions, or living shorelines, are shoreline management techniques that are supported or inspired by nature or natural processes and functions and are designed to mimic natural shorelines, improving the resilience of our shorelines and communities.

Living shorelines have a wide range of benefits, including: the reduction of flooding and erosion, improved water quality, providing greater stability against threats of storms, attracting wildlife, and many more. The bill was inspired by the work of Save the Sound, Riverkeeper, and The Nature Conservancy, three major advocacy organizations confronting the impacts of climate change on water bodies and inland areas. County Legislator Catherine Parker, Mamaroneck Town Supervisor Jaine Elkind Eney, Village of Mamaroneck Deputy Mayor Lou Young, and Village of Larchmont Mayor Sarah Bauer were also present.

Living shoreline principles are vital to improving coastal resilience, reducing flood impacts, preventing shoreline erosion, and protecting natural habitats. Thanks go to Governor Kathy Hochul, the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, Assembly Environmental Conservation Committee Chair Deborah Glick, and the many environmental groups who support these important policies. Senator Mayer and I worked closely to move this bill in both houses. This is important legislation for coastal communities that will help advance nature-based policies at a time when sound practices are needed.

[Video of Press Conference Here](#)

2023 Conference on the Environment

In September I attended the annual Conference on the Environment of the NYS Association of Conservation Commissions (NYSACC). I have been involved

with NYSACC since I served as chair of my community's Conservation Commission decades ago and have been a long-time member of their Board of Directors.

This year's conference was organized by Tompkins County and Ithaca conservation groups who recruited excellent speakers on topics that included meeting climate change targets, water quality, and flood resilience. Two legislative appointees of the NYS Climate Action Council made presentations: Cornell Professor Robert Howarth and Raya Salter, founder of the Energy Justice Law Center.

I attended two fascinating not-for-profit site visits that provided great examples of what the Tompkins County community is doing to reduce waste going to landfills or incinerators. The longstanding NYS policy goal on waste reductions has been to "Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle". The Ithaca area has one of the most active Reuse programs to reduce waste going to upstate landfills. Their stories may provide ideas for new reuse activities in Westchester.

Finger Lakes Reuse

Reuse Finger Lakes and Reuse Ithaca operate in two locations where they sell, repair, and accept donations of furniture, building materials, electronics, sporting goods, clothing, textiles, appliances, books, music, and other items. Their program grosses about \$2.5 million in sales a year. The location I toured was a hotbed of activity with vehicles lined up to drop off donations, many shoppers purchasing items, and staff repairing items.



After our tour, I met with Executive Director Diane Cohen and Town of Enfield Supervisor Stephanie Redmond. Enfield, a town outside of Ithaca, is planning on expanding reuse options for town residents.

Significant Elements Program

The second program I toured is operated by Historic Ithaca. The Significant Elements program accepts donations of doors, windows, hardware, lighting, furniture, architectural elements, shutters, antiques, vintage decor, and other items from homes being demolished or emptied. These items are carefully catalogued and resold to builders, restoration companies, and individuals needing materials for their own home or restoration project. Significant Elements in Ithaca provide a great example of the importance of diverting useable features of old homes from landfills and incineration to reuse. It was

amazing to tour their three stories of valuable hardware and furniture now available for reuse instead of being added to an upstate landfill.



After the tour, I met with Executive Director Susan Holland and learned about their many not-for-profit activities. Both groups offer more services and activities to reduce waste and help families. You can learn more by visiting their websites.

Reuse in Westchester

In Westchester some municipalities offer furniture drop-off/pickup programs. We also have an outstanding not-for-profit, Furniture Sharehouse, which provides free furniture and household furnishings to economically disadvantaged individuals and families in Westchester. You can learn more about donating furniture, supporting or volunteering at their website.

Westchester County is offering an upcoming reuse opportunity through their

annual Saxon Woods Garage Sale, Saturday, Oct. 14, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Saxon Woods Park in White Plains (previously scheduled for Saturday, Sept. 23). Parking and admission are free. Rain date is Sunday, Oct. 15. Individuals and families can sell their unwanted items, such as clothing, household items, electronics, furniture, toys, books, and sporting goods. There are no professional antiques or collectible dealers. For more information visit the county [website](#) or call (914) 995-4480.

I hope these stories from Ithaca provide some ideas on how you or groups you work with can think about expanding reuse opportunities in Westchester. Most of our garbage is burned in a facility in Peekskill. When we divert materials through reuse, recycling, or composting of organic waste and food scraps, we reduce the negative impacts of incineration on air quality.

UAW Picket Line



Last week I traveled to Rockland County to support striking UAW members by walking the picket line with them at a Chrysler Parts Facility in Tappan. Nationwide the UAW is seeking increased wages and elimination of the multi-tier system of compensation that has employees doing the same jobs but being paid at markedly different pay levels. I am a strong supporter of the collective bargaining process and was joined on the picket line by members of other labor unions and elected officials from the region. I am pictured here with Jeffrey Parcell, President of the UAW Local 3039, the unit employed at the Rockland County facility.



Greater New York City

Help Families Affected by Floods

The Fuller Center for Housing is helping residents recover and accepting donations. Please visit their website [HERE](#).

The Community Resource Center in Mamaroneck is also providing support to the 41 families processed through the CRC case management intake system documenting their loss and needs, collecting just over \$10,000 in gift cards. Families are using this money to meet emergency clothing, toiletry, food, transportation and other needs presented by their dislocation or apartment damage. They are collecting gift cards through the weekend. **Drop gift cards anytime until Sunday 10/8 at 7 pm at the home of Meg Kaufer (606 Orienta Ave, Mamaroneck) or Sarah Coady (43 Mohegan Rd, Larchmont) –** gift cards can be put through the mail slot in the front door at either address.

Governor Proclaims October as College Application Month in NYS

For First Time, SUNY, CUNY, and More Than 40 Private Colleges and Universities Are Banding Together to Waive Application Fees During College Application Month

A Complete List of Participating Campuses and Information About Fee Waivers Available [Here](#).

HESC, SUNY, and CUNY have scheduled virtual and in-person events throughout the month to encourage students to learn more about the New York State financial aid, inform students about their college options, and assist them in completing their applications. For a list of more than 70 financial aid events hosted by HESC click [here](#). SUNY sessions can be found [here](#) and a list of more than 100 events hosted by CUNY can be found [here](#).



The federal government relaunched its free COVID-19 at-home tests program. Households can receive four free rapid tests delivered directly to their home. For more information and to place an order, visit <https://www.covid.gov/tests>.

I also have Covid test kits at my district office in Port Chester. Please call us at 914-939-7028 to let us know if you would like to pick some up.

