



News from
State Senator Antoine Thompson

Chair, Senate Environmental Conservation Committee

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**SENATOR ANTOINE M. THOMPSON: CLEANING UP WATER IN SCAJAQUADA CREEK
SCAJAQUADA SUMMIT ADDRESSING POLLUTED WATER**

(Buffalo, NY) Senator Antoine Thompson (D-parts of Erie & Niagara Counties), committed to environmental preservation in New York, is taking the initial steps needed to move forward with addressing ongoing issues with Scajaquada Creek water quality.

More than 60 key stakeholders from across the region gathered for the Scajaquada Summit geared toward gathering input and formulating solutions to the water quality problem at the creek.

“I remember jogging around Hoyt Lake in high school when I ran track,” explained Senator Thompson. “Even now, I continue to jog around the lake and around Delaware Park. I have become frustrated with the conditions in the area. The stinch on a hot day is something you don’t want to smell.

“The Scajaquada Creek, which is shared by urban and suburban communities alike, is sadly a host to botulism, biological contaminants, industrial chemical pollution, trash and unsightly algae,” said Senator Thompson. “And when the creek is forced underground into a culvert for about three miles, it becomes part of the Buffalo sewer system. On days with heavy rain, the creek becomes part of the combined sewer overflow system and human waste becomes part of the equation.”

Senator Thompson is proposing to eliminate the sewer overflows that empty into Scajaquada Creek. Additionally, he is advocating for the creation of a Scajaquada Creek Protection Zone where new projects would need to have either no impact or a net positive impact on the creek’s water quality. Other recommendations from Senator Thompson include incorporating various cultural changes along the walking trails like plaques on pathways that tell the creek’s history and other Buffalo historical facts so that people can have an appreciation of one of the city’s prominent natural resources.

Participants for the Scajaquada Summit included Julie O’Neil, Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper; Jerry Palumbo, regional water engineer, NYSDEC (New York State Department of Environment Conservation); Jordan Dalton, curator, Beyond the Multitudes; Joseph Dispenza, president, Forest Lawn Cemetery; Mark Kubiniec, Grant-Amherst Business Association and Bogdan Fundalinski, a historian with a vast array of knowledge on the history of the creek.

Fundalinski said, “I grew up along the creek since I was five years old, and I have watched it change. Whatever we remove from the creek, we should put back.” One of Fundalinski’s recommendations is to redesign the Grant Street Bridge where the view of the creek is obstructed with a solid wall. “You can’t see the Scajaquada Creek from there. You can’t fix the problem if you can’t see it,” Fundalinski noted.

Revitalization efforts for Scajaquada Creek have captured the attention of various agencies aimed at cleaning up the sediment that has accumulated in the creek. Forest Lawn Heritage Foundation, with the help of Olmsted Parks Conservancy and Buffalo Niagara Riverkeeper has collaborated to obtain water samples to investigate possible contamination.

Sediment contained in storm water and combined sewer runoff has accumulated in several areas in Forest Lawn Cemetery, Delaware Park and Scajaquada Creek as the flow velocities change due to altered creek hydrology. There is a long-standing concern that the sediment may contain harmful chemicals and that anaerobic conditions in the sediment may contribute to Type C botulism (also known as Avian Botulism) outbreaks in the creek’s lower reaches. Researchers believe that the botulism and other contaminants is the cause of seasonal die-offs of birds, turtles and other aquatic wildlife and also affects the full enjoyment of the Scajaquada Creek corridor by humans.

Audience participants; residents around the creek, environmental organizations, students and representatives from elected offices; had suggestions on what they would like to see done in the revitalization efforts including bringing back canoeing & kayaking, restoring a fountain that historic pictures show used to exist in the creek, and addressing the aesthetics by eliminating obstructions to the creek’s view.

One of the audience participants who came out to show support for local artist and friend Jordan Dalton, said, “There is a big arts community that is interested in cleaning up Scajaquada Creek. What I saw at today’s summit was a renewed interest in the way government works with various organizations to get results. It takes summits like this one assembled by Senator Thompson to get all parties together to make sure everyone is talking and on one accord. A lot of people get pumped up about this topic, but then the energy dies down. It has to be constantly in our face in order for it to be constantly on our minds,” said Alice Alexandrescu.

A Scajaquada Creek clean up will take place on Wednesday, September 25th, beginning at 9 a.m. Participants will meet at the American Legion Post 1041, 533 Amherst Street in Buffalo. Volunteers will gather to rid the creek area of garbage and graffiti.

In addition to residents removing debris from storm drains outside of their homes and redirecting gutters away from their home foundations and into their backyards, Senator Thompson suggests writing letters to city, county, state and federal elected officials in support of initiatives to restore Scajaquada Creek. Letters should also go to local newspapers to keep the issue in the forefront.

“I have the audacity to believe we can get things done to achieve our objective of cleaning up the creek. I have an urgency to do this, and I am committed to doing my share in the Senate to assist in the process,” concluded Senator Thompson.

For more information:

scajaquada.org.

<http://www.nysenate.gov/senator/antoine-m-thompson>

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