

LONG ISLAND ENVIRONMENT

## Hochul: \$2.25M for cesspool replacement on Long Island



Gov. Kathy Hochul on Monday announced \$2.25 million in federal funds for Long Islanders to replace aging septic systems.

Credit: AP/ Joshua Bessex

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Gov. Kathy Hochul on Monday announced \$2.25 million in federal funding aimed at encouraging Long Islanders to replace aging cesspools and septic tanks, efforts that officials said will reduce nitrogen and improve the region's water quality.

The funding included in the federal infrastructure package focuses on improving water quality in Long Island Sound. It includes grants of up to \$20,000 for homeowners to replace older or failing septic systems with new nitrogen-reducing versions.

"This federal funding will improve watersheds and septic systems in countless Long Island communities, furthering our commitment to ensure all New Yorkers have access to safe, clean water," Hochul said.

In July, Hochul announced \$20 million for Suffolk County to replace more than 2,000 septic tanks and cesspools as part of the State Septic Replacement System. Suffolk County launched a grant replacement program in 2017, but more than 1,000 homeowners were taxed as additional income for the grants.

U.S. Sen. Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) last week called on the Internal Revenue Service to reverse a 2020 ruling to tax the grants. The U.S. Department of Agriculture ruled earlier

this month that septic tank upgrades should be tax exempt, but was waiting for the IRS to change its policy.

Officials hope the quality of marine life will improve by reducing nitrogen —a cause of fish kills —as well as algae blooms and destruction of marshlands that provide natural storm barriers. Water is being monitored through Long Island Sound Study, a cooperative of researchers and regulators led by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in New York and Connecticut.

The funding is the first installment of a multiyear partnership with Long Island Sound Study, expected to deliver \$8 million in local and state improvements, Hochul's office said.

"I have long fought to protect Long Island's environment and sole-source drinking-water aquifer against the scourge of nitrogen pollution. I have brought record federal funding in all areas back to New York, including for drinking- and wastewater-infrastructure projects," Schumer said in a statement Monday.

The Department of Environmental Conservation recently approved Nassau County's Nine Key Element Plan to reduce nitrogen with Stony Brook University.

The plan includes the Bay Park Conveyance project, which will stop pumping 50 million gallons of treated sewage per day into the Western Bays and Reynolds Channel from East Rockaway and Long Beach, by transporting treated sewage to Wantagh, where it will be pumped three miles into the Atlantic Ocean.



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