

Congressman Thomas R. Suozzi

Prepared Remarks:

House Appropriation Interior Subcommittee Member Day

Tuesday, March 10, 2020

Chairwoman McCollum, Ranking Member Joyce and fellow Members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity, and the time, to testify in support of funding for the Long Island Sound and the Land and Water Conservation Fund. These are two critical issues to people in my district – the third Congressional district of New York which encompasses Queens, Nassau, Suffolk County – and across the country. I am seeking your continued support for robust funding for Fiscal Year 2021.

Along with a bipartisan group of colleagues, I'm requesting an increase in funding for the Long Island Sound from \$21 million in FY2020 to \$30.4 million in FY2021 to help safeguard and continue restoring water quality and the diverse habitat of the Long Island Sound. The Long Island Sound is our "National Park." More than 25 million people from Long Island, New York and Connecticut live within an hour's drive of the Sound.

The heavy use of the Sound has taken a toll on the local ecosystem, especially on water quality and wildlife. Over the past 30 years, a partnership between federal, state and local agencies, as well as citizen stakeholders like Save the Sound, Coalition to Save Hempstead Harbor, Citizens Campaign for the Environment, Friends of the Bay and many others, have helped make significant environmental improvements. We have made significant strides in reducing nutrient (nitrogen) loads, habitat restoration, public involvement and education, and water quality monitoring.

These efforts, along with critical federal funding you have provided, have helped turn the Sound around. I grew up swimming and fishing in the Long Island Sound. My children do today. I have devoted a significant part of my past 25 years in public service to cleaning up pollution, dramatically reducing nitrogen, modernizing sewage treatment plants, and restoring shell fishing. There is so much more that we can accomplish with your help.

Another critical issue for my constituents is support for funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). Along with over 150 of my colleagues, we are requesting support for robust funding in FY2021.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund supports public land conservation and ensures access to the outdoors for all Americans. It has helped fund access to outdoor recreation opportunities in every state and in 98 percent of counties across the country.

Funding has opened key areas for fishing and recreational access, as well as supporting working forests and ranches, and acquiring and protecting critical lands in national parks, national wildlife refuges, national forests, Civil War battlefields and other federal areas.

New York's third Congressional district is home to one our Nation's smallest National Parks, Sagamore Hill. The "Summer White House" or Sagamore Hill was the home for our 26th President, Theodore Roosevelt, from 1885 until his death in 1919. Sagamore National Park, located on 83 acres of the President's former property, provides opportunities for Long Islanders, and people from across the country, to learn more about our Nation's history and culture as well as the local ecosystem.

With this committee's support for the Land and Water Conservation Fund, Congress can continue to preserve this land owned by our 26th President and provide opportunities for people across the Country to

learn more about one of our Nation's finest leaders. I'm proud to work with local organizers like Lisa Ott who fight every day to protect these beautiful places.

Of course, Sagamore Hill is just one example of many critical natural and historical sites supported by the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

Thank you for your time and consideration for these two critical issues. My colleagues and I look forward to working with you to maintain support for the Long Island Sound and Land and Water Conservation Fund to help conserve the natural beauty of our great country and expand access to more people to experience and learn about our Nation's history.