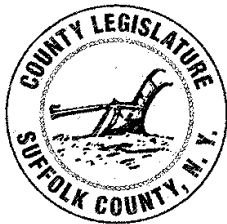


OFFICE OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE

JON COOPER
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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Cooper Seeks to Preserve Pristine Parcel in Cold Spring Harbor

CENTERPORT, NY—When most Suffolk County residents think of land preservation efforts, their minds drift east of the Peconic River to remote farms and seldom-seen vast tracts with few neighbors. That's why County Legislative Majority Leader Jon Cooper (D-Lloyd Harbor) is spearheading efforts to preserve more than 30 acres of pristine land here in western Suffolk County.

Cooper's goal is the DeForest Williams property in Cold Spring Harbor. The proposed acquisition is comprised of more than 31 acres of heavily wooded hillside land, sloping downwards to Shore Road. Filled with old-growth trees, freshwater springs and open meadows, it has several trails which offer connectivity to the northern trailhead of the Nassau/Suffolk Greenbelt Trail. The property is home to a wide variety of birds, other animals, trees, plants and wildflowers.

Cooper's resolution would authorize the County's Division of Real Estate to take all preliminary steps towards the acquisition of the undeveloped portion of the DeForest Williams property, such as performing appraisals, preparing a site survey and doing an environmental audit. This parcel was included on Suffolk County's 2004 Master List of environmentally sensitive open space recommended for acquisition by the County.

In these days of shrinking municipal budgets, Cooper's proposal is made more attractive because it includes a three-way public-private partnership between Suffolk County, the Town of Huntington and the North Shore Land Alliance. The County would foot 50% of the final acquisition costs, with the Town of Huntington putting up 25% and the North Shore Land Alliance raising the remaining 25%. Cooper's resolution calls for funding the acquisition of this open space under Suffolk County's newly revamped Drinking Water Protection Program, which Cooper championed in 2007 and was adopted via a public referendum.

— MORE, MORE, MORE —

"The North Shore Land Alliance fully supports Legislator Cooper's resolution to preserve the DeForest Williams property," stated Beth Baldwin, the Alliance's attorney. "As one of the last remaining large tracts of land in western Suffolk County, preservation of this environmentally sensitive and historic parcel will benefit all residents of the community, protect the health of the Cold Spring Harbor Estuary and provide important groundwater protections for generations to come. The North Shore Land Alliance commends Legislator Cooper for working towards permanently protecting this endangered natural resource."

Cooper fears that if the property were to be developed, it would increase the nitrogen load from residential run-off (*primarily non-sewered human waste and residential fertilizers*) into the already fragile waters of Cold Spring Harbor, which is a vital bird, fish and wildlife habitat. According to the Long Island Sound Study (*the LISS is a bi-state partnership consisting of federal and state agencies, user groups, concerned organizations and individuals dedicated to restoring and protecting the Sound*), run-off causes hypoxia, a condition that occurs in bodies of water as dissolved oxygen concentrations decrease to levels where organisms become physically stressed and ultimately cannot survive. Prolonged hypoxic conditions result in severe die-offs of animals that are unable to move out of these hypoxic waters, provokes mass migrations of mobile animals, and causes other adverse ecological effects.

Cooper's concerns are real. Currently, a 15-lot subdivision application for the DeForest Williams property is before the Town of Huntington's Planning Board. If developed according to this subdivision plan, 12 additional single-family homes would be constructed on the property. Since 1987, the LISS has tracked the area and duration of hypoxia in the Sound. In 2007, hypoxia lasted 58 days and at its peak affected 162 square miles – about four times the size of Manhattan.

In 2008, Cooper successfully championed a law to ensure the future preservation of additional open space in the more densely populated western towns of Suffolk County by making it easier to acquire open space in areas with more than 1,000 residents per square mile. Now those parcels in "underserved communities" receive higher scores on the County's open space rating system because of their population concentrations. These environmentally friendly parcels (including the DeForest Williams property) are increasingly becoming as crucial to ensuring the long-term viability of residential communities as access to schools and shopping have been in the past.

"Open space is a critical component of our quality of life in Huntington, which is why it's so important that we protect this truly spectacular property," Cooper said. "I'm confident that public-private partnerships like the one I'm proposing will play an increasingly important role in making open space preservation viable in the future."

Cooper's planning steps resolution will be considered first by the Legislature's Environment, Planning & Agriculture Committee at their Monday, November 14th meeting in Hauppauge, which begins at 1 p.m. If approved out of that Committee, the resolution could be adopted at the Legislature's general meeting on November 22nd.