



MEMORANDUM OF SUPPORT

Funding for Sewage Pollution Right to Know Implementation (\$500,000)

Background

Many communities throughout New York State are served by aging and failing sewage infrastructure. Sewage infrastructure that is overwhelmed or dilapidated results in billions of gallons of raw or partially treated sewage being released into the environment. Sewer systems carry waste from domestic, commercial, and industrial users. Sewage can contain disease-causing microorganisms, floating human waste, toxic pollutants, oil, grease, pesticides, drugs, and other contaminants.

According to the EPA, between 1.8 and 3.5 million Americans become ill every year from recreational contact with waters contaminated by sewage. Bacteria, viruses, and parasites found in untreated sewage can cause severe short-term health impacts such as gastrointestinal problems, infections, and fevers, as well as serious chronic conditions such as heart, liver or kidney failure, arthritis, and cancer. The elderly, children, and immune-compromised are particularly susceptible to the threat posed by exposure to sewage.

Justification

In 2012, the Legislature passed the Sewage Pollution Right to Know Act (SPR TK). SPR TK is intended to provide the public with timely information about sewage overflows, so that families can avoid swimming, boating, or fishing in waters recently fouled with sewage.

Unfortunately, there are still communities that are unable to fully comply with the law because they lack the necessary monitoring technology; particularly communities with Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs). More than 33 billion gallons of combined sewage and stormwater from CSO systems is discharged into New York's waterways annually, making CSOs the largest single source of sewage contamination that is covered by SPR TK.

In 2014 the Legislature allocated \$500,000 to give communities technical assistance in complying with SPR TK, specifically monitoring and modeling for CSO discharges. While this is a good first step, more communities still need technical assistance to ensure that all New Yorkers have the right to know about sewage pollution in their communities. **CCE urges the Legislature to again allocate \$500,000 for the DEC to assist communities with SPR TK implementation.**

CCE SUPPORTS \$500,000 FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF SEWAGE POLLUTION RIGHT TO KNOW IN THE 2016-17 NYS BUDGET

CCE is an 80,000 member non-profit, non-partisan advocacy organization that works to empower communities and advocate solutions that protect public health and the natural environment.