

COUNTY OF SUFFOLK

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Media Release

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It's A 'Watershed' Moment for the Carmans River *Suffolk County & Brookhaven Town Partner to Preserve 171 Acres*



(Left to right: Randy Parsons, The Nature Conservancy; Brookhaven Town Supervisor Edward Romaine; County Executive Steve Bellone; Richard Amper, Long Island Pine Barrens Society; Legislator Kate Browning; Marilyn England, The Open Space Council; Councilwoman Connie Kepert; Johan McConnell; Legislator Rob Calarco and John McConnell.)

Yaphank, NY – The largest acquisition in the history of the Carmans River watershed was completed yesterday when the Suffolk County Legislature approved Introductory Resolution 1902-14, which solidified the purchase of 171 acres of environmentally sensitive land from developer Avalon Bay Communities Inc. The preservation of these keys parcels was made possible through a partnership between Suffolk County and Brookhaven Town, who split the \$4 million cost in the landmark deal. Today, County Executive Steve Bellone and Suffolk County Legislator's Kate Browning and Rob Calarco joined Councilwoman Connie Kepert, Supervisor Edward Romaine, environmentalists and local residents to announce the important acquisition for a river that has been at the center of intense efforts to protect it for future generations.

The 171 acres are located in the 0-10 year contributing area of the Carmans River along the north side of Mill Road in Yaphank and Medford. If not acquired the property was in jeopardy of being developed for residential purposes, which would have negatively impacted water quality in the river.

“These are the most significant land holdings left in the Carmans River Watershed, and have been the number one priority for preservation for years,” stated Legislator Kate Browning. “Working together with our partners in Brookhaven Town we have taken a major step forward in implementing the Carmans River Watershed Protection and Management Plan, and are ensuring that this river will remain a pristine water body for future generations.”

The Carmans River is a New York State designated Wild and Scenic River Corridor. The parcels received the highest environmental rating of any property in Brookhaven Town since the County’s open space program began, and are located adjacent to Suffolk County owned property where development rights have already been purchased. The properties are extensively wooded, consisting of an oak-pitch pine forest. The area provides wildlife habitat value to a wide variety of field and forest dwelling mammal, bird, reptile, and insect species. Situated within Hydrogeologic Zone III, the property is estimated to recharge 267,000 gallons of clean water daily, or 98 million gallons a year to the underlying drinking water aquifers and the Carmans River.

“Suffolk County was happy to work with the Town of Brookhaven and environmental advocates to preserve this critical parcel as an open space acquisition,” said County Executive Steve Bellone. “The preservation of this parcel continues to further Suffolk County’s *Reclaim Our Water* Initiative focused on protecting the quality of Suffolk County’s surface and ground waters.

“I am delighted that the 171 acres of environmentally sensitive land within the Carmans River Watershed, previously owned by developer Avalon Bay, will be preserved as Open Space through a 50/50 partnership between the Town of Brookhaven and Suffolk County,” stated Councilwoman Connie Kepert. “As the Councilwoman representing the communities within the Carmans River Corridor, I have long advocated for the dedication of open space funds to purchase sensitive land surrounding this precious natural resource and the purchase of these parcels has been a top priority of mine. Thank you to Legislator Kate Browning for her help in preserving these critical parcels.”

"This acquisition by the Town and County is a result of our strong commitment to protect the Carmans River and the environmentally sensitive area that surrounds it," said Brookhaven Town Supervisor Ed Romaine. "I thank Legislator Browning for partnering with us to preserve this very important parcel and I look forward to working with her and other members of the County Legislature to acquire more open space throughout the Town."

“This property lies within the critical watershed area of the Carmans River and its acquisition will help protect the health of that beautiful river,” stated Legislator Rob Calarco. “I want to thank my colleagues in the county for supporting this important purchase.”

“The Nature Conservancy strongly supports and applauds the County and Town acquisition of the 171-acre Avalon Bay property in the watershed of the Carmans River,” said Nancy Kelley, executive director of The Nature Conservancy on Long Island. “We consider these lands to be among the most important private holdings still in need of protection in Suffolk County if we are to protect and restore the water quality in our rivers, bays and aquifers, allow for world class outdoor recreational opportunities, provide habitat where fish and wildlife can thrive, and pass on our unique natural heritage to the next generation. We give special recognition to Brookhaven Supervisor Ed Romaine, County Legislator Kate Browning and Brookhaven Councilwoman Connie Kepert who led the effort to put these lands into public ownership.”

“This acquisition represents a major step in the ultimate protection of the Carmans River” stated Richard Amper, Long Island Pine Barrens Society. “Its size and strategic location will go a long way toward protecting the Carmans River in the future. Congratulations to all!”

"Preserving open space in the Carmans River Watershed is key to reversing the damage that is already occurring to our rivers and bays as a result of overdevelopment," stated Marilyn England, The Open Space Council. "If there is any change of ensuring this vital resource is there for future generations, the time to act is now. This acquisition, along with others, is an important step toward that goal."

The parcels will be transferred to the Department of Parks and Recreation and will be designated for passive use.

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