

NEWS RELEASE

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LEAHY AND SCHUMER SECURE FUNDS TO PREVENT SHUTOFF OF FLOOD GAUGES IN CHAMPLAIN BASIN *Gauges In Clinton, Essex, and Washington Counties Were Crucial During Irene And Spring Floods*

U.S. Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) and U.S. Senator Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.) have secured funding to prevent the imminent shutdown of river and lake gauges in the New York-Vermont Lake Champlain basin that proved their worth again last year during spring floods and Tropical Storm Irene. Leahy said, "This close call in losing the monitoring network made clear that these gauges pay for themselves many times over, and in so many ways. They save lives and protect farmland and other property, and they are crucial in our work to clean up Lake Champlain. It's a proven and effective network that well serves the people of Vermont and New York."

"Flipping off these gauges would have forced us to tie one hand behind our back to fight flooding, when we really need all hands on deck," said Schumer. "When the storms hit, these stream gauges helped our first responders save lives and property, providing invaluable real-time information as the waters rose. This investment ensures that they won't be switched off come March, and I'm going to keep working to make sure they're not at risk of being shut off in the future."

For years Leahy, a senior member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, has secured year-to-year funding for the 18 gauges - 9 in Vermont and 9 in New York -- which are operated by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). Budget cuts this year closed that revenue stream, endangering the 18 gauges. Leahy and Schumer appealed to the Great Lakes Fishery Commission (GLFC) to use funds available to Lake Champlain in the commission's budget to keep the gauges going. Last month the senators wrote to the commission and to U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar about the importance of the USGS gauging network, and their request for the funding now has been approved. The senators said the influx will keep the gauges operating while buying time to work on long-term funding solutions for the monitoring network. Leahy chairs the Appropriations Committee panel that oversees the GLFC budget.

The gauges are important for ongoing water quality control monitoring and improvements and they are lifesaving tools when flooding threatens the region's rivers and streams. Half of the gauges slated for shut-down have been identified by the National Weather Service as important for their flood forecasting work. Last May, with Lake Champlain far above record levels, crews in Vermont and New York worked around the clock to keep roads open to low-lying areas. They needed real-time readings to know exact lake levels, which varied from day-to-day, and that information came from these gauges. The USGS gauges were crucial as Irene swept Vermont and New York, allowing first responders, local and state officials, and farmers and businesses to

plan and act ahead of the rising flood waters. By all accounts, lives were certainly saved as the gauging data guided evacuations, and farmers were able to salvage many thousands of dollars in crops ahead of the flood tides.

Even before the storms of 2011, however, the USGS gauging network in the Champlain Valley was threatened under earlier rounds of budget cuts. These 18 gauges were to be shut down in less than two months, on March 1.

In New York, the gauges that will benefit from the funding are:

Clinton

- * Great Chazy River at Perry Mills
- * Little Chazy River near Chazy
- * Salmon River at South Plattsburgh
- * Little Ausable River near Valcour
- * Ausable River near AuSable Forks

Essex

- * Boquet River at Willsboro
- * Putnam Creek east of Crown Point Center

Washington

- * Lake Champlain north of Whitehall
- * Mettawee River near Middle Granville